

SHARPS SAFETY

To prevent accidents associated with the use and disposal of needles and syringes, pipettes, scalpels, and other sharps, EHS recommends the following practices.

1. Needles and syringes or other sharp instruments should be restricted in the laboratory for use only when there is no alternative, such as parenteral injection, phlebotomy, or aspiration of fluids from laboratory animals and diaphragm bottles. Plasticware should be substituted for glassware whenever possible.
2. Use needles and other sharps only when safer methods are not feasible. Only Luerloc or single-unit syringes are suitable for use with hazardous materials or agents. Retractable blade utility knives are preferred to scalpels for opening boxes. Use "safe sharps" such as self-sheathing needles whenever possible.
3. Package all sharps in EHS approved, puncture-resistant sharps containers for disposal. Sharps containers are available from the warehouse. Needles are never to be discarded in redbag or regular trash.
4. Syringe needles shall not be recapped, bent, broken, or otherwise handled after use.
5. Employees shall never reach their hands into any container used for contaminated sharps.
6. Any utensil such as tongs, forceps, or a dustpan and broom shall be used to pick up contaminated broken glass, needles, or other sharps that have fallen to the floor, etc.
7. Sharps (primarily needles and syringes) should be immediately discarded into an appropriate sharps container after use. If the sharps are contaminated with potentially infectious material, then autoclave the sharps container prior to disposal.

Pipettes can be decontaminated before or after placing in a sharps container. They can be placed in a shallow pan of disinfectant and allowed to soak for the appropriate contact time, then removed and placed in a sharps container or the sharps container containing the pipettes can be autoclaved.

After use, all sharps must be packaged and handled in such a manner as to prevent accidental punctures. The NCI-Frederick warehouse stocks autoclavable sharps disposal containers in three sizes, large plastic (9.5 qt.) stock #66401504, an extra large (5 gallon) stock #66401505, and a biomedical waste container (11 gallon) stock #66401506. These containers shall be sealed when three-fourths full and placed in the

medical waste cart outside the building by laboratory personnel (FME service workers do not handle sharps containers).

Sharps contaminated with biohazardous agents must be decontaminated prior to disposal. Pipettes should be placed in a shallow pan of disinfectant or a rigid disposable container, then autoclaved if necessary. Autoclavable extra-large sharps disposal containers (stock #66401505) or biomedical waste containers (stock #66401506) may also be used for scalpel, razor blades, and other sharps disposal.

Sharps contaminated with both hazardous chemicals, and biohazardous agents, should not be autoclaved. Instead, they should be chemically disinfected as appropriate for the biological agent. One-gallon plastic jugs (warehouse stock #81151082 and lid #81151083) may be suitable for small items such as Pasteur pipettes.

Sharps contaminated with radiological materials can be placed in labeled containers and disposed as radioactive waste. Decontamination of biohazards mixed with radioactive isotopes may require assistance from Biosafety.

If you have questions about proper sharps handling and disposal, please call EHS at x1451.