

IBC APPENDIX G SHARPS HANDLING AND DISPOSAL SOP

Sharps are items that can easily puncture the skin. Examples include needles, razor blades, scalpel blades, Pasteur pipettes, capillary tubes, microscope slides, and cover slips. Handle and dispose all sharps in a manner that protects you and others from injury and possible exposure.

General Precautions:

- Substitute plasticware for glass whenever possible.
- If using glassware, routinely inspect it and remove from service any items that are damaged, starred, cracked, or chipped. Dispose in the lab's "Broken Lab Glassware" box. When the box is full, seal it and carry it out to the Dumpster. Custodial staff have been instructed not to handle this waste stream.
- When working with sharps, make sure lighting is adequate and the workspace is not crowded. If it is, take a few minutes to clear the area and improve the lighting if possible before beginning work.
- Be alert at all times when handling sharps.
- Don't look away or become distracted when working with sharps.
- Use rounded or blunt end devices when practicable.
- Keep sharp tools sharp and use the right tool for the task.
- Use cut-resistant gloves if practicable. In some cases, heavy rubber gloves (i.e. when washing glassware) or double-gloving with surgical gloves (when dexterity is important) may be appropriate.
- Do not handle broken glass with your hands, even if you are wearing gloves. Use engineering controls such as tongs or a dustpan and broom instead.
- Do not leave unprotected sharps laying on bench tops or loose in drawers. Always use protective shields, cases, sleeves, Styrofoam blocks, tube holders, etc.
- Protect the sharp when passing from one person to another. If not feasible, use verbal communication when passing.
- Use needle syringes only when necessary. If a needle syringe is essential to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically re-sheathes the needle.
- Do not try to recap the needle of a syringe. An accidental puncture might occur and cause an exposure. Dispose directly into a sharps container.
- If recapping is necessary, use the one-handed technique.
- Used needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated by hand before disposal.
- Keep a sharps disposal container accessible in the immediate work area and put used sharps directly into the sharps container.
- Do not lay used sharps down on the bench top.
- Do not overfill the sharps container. Leave room to seal the lid properly.
- Do not try to retrieve items from sharps disposal containers.
- Sharps containers are managed as Rhode Island Regulated Medical Waste. When the container is full, dispose in a biohazard waste box. Contact EH&S for pick-up if you don't have a box or there isn't one on your floor.
- Do not store sharps containers in the chemical hazardous waste satellite accumulation area.