



Standard Operating Procedures



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Name of Policy:	Protocol for Disposing of Sharps	Departments:	All
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This SOP aims to provide guidelines for the safe and effective disposal of sharps in a veterinary hospital. Proper disposal is crucial to prevent injury, infection, and contamination.

Definition of Sharps

Sharps refer to any medical instruments capable of puncturing or cutting the skin. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Needles
- Syringes with or without attached needles
- Scalpels
- Lancets
- Glass ampoules
- Broken glass that has been contaminated with biohazardous material

(OSHA standards also includes anything that a needle can be attached to and injected - ex: syringes)

Appropriate Sharps Containers

An appropriate sharps container should:

- Be made of puncture-resistant material (e.g., hard plastic)
- Have a closeable, tight-fitting lid
- Be leak-proof on sides and bottom
- Be labeled with the biohazard symbol

Proper Disposal into the Sharps Container

1. **Do Not Recap:**
 - Never recap needles before disposal.
2. **One-Handed Technique:**
 - Use a one-handed technique to place the sharp into the container to avoid injuries.
3. **Immediate Disposal:**
 - Dispose of sharps immediately after use. Do not leave them on counters or trays.
4. **Do Not Overfill:**
 - Do not force sharps into a container. If the container is nearly full, do not attempt to overload it.

When is the Container Too Full?

- A sharps container is considered too full when it reaches the fill line indicated on the container (usually $\frac{3}{4}$ full).
- Never allow sharps to protrude from the opening.

Procedure Once the Container is Full

1. **Seal the Container:**
 - Once full, seal the container securely.
2. **Labeling:**
 - Ensure the container is properly labeled with biohazard symbols if not pre-labeled.
3. **Safe Storage:**
 - Store the sealed container in a designated biohazard waste storage area.
4. **Disposal:**
 - Follow your veterinary hospital's protocols for the disposal of biohazard waste. This usually involves collection by a licensed medical waste disposal service.

Sharps Protocol MLAH Additions

- All sharps bins must be positioned in a way that the biohazard label is facing out and visible.
- Lids on all sharps bins must be in a closed position.
 - Be careful not to close small bins fully to avoid locking them.
 - Large sharps bins have half lids that can be opened and closed easily.
- Sharps bins should never be overflowing, have sharps sticking out past the fill line, or surpassing the lids opening.

Small sharps bin

- Small sharps bins must be locked closed.
- Place the bin in the biohazard box with red liner in the storage shed.
- New containers and lids are on the floor alongside the large sharps containers.
- DO NOT remove the lid and dump the contents into a large sharps container

Large sharps bins

- Large sharps bins are taken to the storage shed.
- The split lid **must** be taken off and a solid lid must be placed on the bin.
 - Solid and split lids are stored on the shelf above the large sharps containers
- This lets the collection company know which bins to take. *If the lid is not switched it will not be taken.
 - All large sharps containers are collected on Monday mornings
- Replacement bins are in the shed on the floor with plastic liners already in them.
- Be sure the bin is to fill line or roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ full before changing as we have a limited number of these bins.

Conclusion

Proper disposal of sharps is a critical component of maintaining a safe veterinary hospital environment. Adherence to these guidelines ensures the safety of staff, patients, and the environment.

Sources:

[Protecting Yourself When Handling Contaminated Sharps \(osha.gov\)](https://www.osha.gov/SLHC/OSHA-3092.pdf)

[Sharps Disposal Containers | FDA](https://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/sharps-disposal-containers)

[Best Way to Get Rid of Used Needles and Other Sharps | FDA](https://www.fda.gov/oc/ohrt/best-way-get-rid-used-needles-and-other-sharps)