

Friday 5 July 2024

Staying safe when managing sharps (needles and syringes)

Incident Summary

Sharps (needles/syringes) have been identified as concealed within containers returned for refund at some CRP locations. A sharps injury has the potential to result in contracting a disease such as HIV, hepatitis B or hepatitis C. Network operators can increase their safety by ensuring there are steps in place to reduce the risk when managing sharps.

Management of sharps

When evaluating how best to manage sharps, Operators may wish to consider the following actions:

- Undertake a sharps risk assessment for your site.
- Consult with your workforce.
- Ensure controls are in place and documented.
- Ensure only trained staff are disposing of sharps.
- Use mechanical sorting/counting/handling of containers.
- Use tongs (or similar) to handle sharps.
- Use sharps containers that comply with AS4031 or AS/NZS4261 to collect/dispose of sharps.
- Ensure an adequate number of tongs/sharps containers is available.
- Ensure tongs/sharps containers are located for ease of access to trained staff and away from public access.
- Wear gloves suitable for handling sharps when handling containers/bags of containers.
- Ensure your hands are not placed inside bags of containers to retrieve containers.
- Ensure bags of containers are held away from the body or wear protective clothing that protects against sharps.
- Ensure sharps manual handling processes consider how staff members dispose of sharps without coming into contact with the sharps e.g. :
 - Wear suitable PPE.
 - Minimise the carry distance e.g. taking the sharps container to the needle/syringe.
 - Place the sharps container on a level/secure surface prior to disposing of needle/syringe.
 - Secure the sharps container whilst disposing of the needle/syringe e.g. not holding sharps container by hand.
 - Do not pick up a needle/syringe by hand.
 - Do not attempt to recap a needle/syringe.
 - Use tongs to handle needle/syringe keeping the sharp end away from the body.
 - Dispose of the sharp by placing it end down into sharps container.
 - Do not overfill sharps containers.



- Ensure sharps containers are tightly sealed.
- Ensure appropriate disposal of sharps containers.
- Have known processes to follow in the event of a sharps injury occurring including medical procedures, incident reporting and investigation and risk assessment and management.

Resources

<https://youtu.be/8c78c92UbHA>

<https://containerexchange.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Think-Safe-Work-Safe-Handbook-1.pdf>

<https://www.worksafe.qld.gov.au/safety-and-prevention/hazards/hazardous-exposures/biological-hazards/skin-penetrating-injuries>

Questions

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