

Guidance on Sharps Disposal Management

These guidelines apply to the disposal of sharp objects that are contaminated with any of the following hazardous materials: biological hazards (e.g., infectious agents, human blood/body fluids), hazardous chemicals, radioactive materials, and **ALL** blades, needles and syringes regardless of how they were used. Federal, State and local laws regulate proper disposal of sharps. These regulations serve several purposes:

1. Prevent personal injury.
2. Prevent contamination of personnel or the environment.
3. Ensure proper containment of laboratory and infectious waste during collection, transfer, and disposal.

What Are Sharps?

Sharps are any object with corners, edges, or projections that when inappropriately handled or disposed are capable of cutting or piercing skin or conventional waste containers.

Examples of sharps include:

- Hypodermic needles, syringes, tubing
- Blades (scalpels, razors)
- Sharp dental wires and appliances
- Microscope slides and cover slips
- Glass capillary tubes
- Pasteur pipettes
- Plastic pipette tips contaminated with hazardous materials
- Broken laboratory glassware.



How Do I Collect Sharps?:

All sharps must meet these minimum standards:

- rigid
- non-breakable and puncture resistant
- impervious to moisture and leak proof

In addition, all biologically infectious sharps must:

- have a lid which can be permanently closed
- red in color and/or labeled with a universal biohazard symbol



Collection Procedure:

Sharps containers **MUST BE**:

- stored near where the waste is generated and segregated from other waste

Sharps containers **MUST NOT**:

- be filled greater than 2/3 full
- be discarded in the regular trash
- contain free liquids

There are five types of waste sharps that are generated on campus:

1. Sharps with chemical contamination
2. Sharps with radiological contamination
3. Sharps with biological/infectious contamination
4. Uncontaminated sharps
5. Uncontaminated lab glassware

Sharps needs to be managed safely to ensure that someone is not injured.

Sharps with chemical contamination-collect in an opaque, puncture-proof container that can be closed/sealed. The container should be submitted to EHS with the appropriate UT hazardous waste label/description per EHS policy. The sharps container should **not** be red/orange or bear the biohazard label as our chemical waste contractor will not accept those. Please contact EHS at 974-5084 for guidance and information on where to take these containers for disposal.



Sharps with radiological contamination-collect in an opaque, puncture-proof container that can be closed/sealed. The container should be submitted to Radiation Safety with the appropriate hazardous label/description per Radiation Safety policy. The sharps container should **not** bear the biohazard label, or a UT hazardous waste label. Please contact 974-5580 or radiationsafety@utk.edu for additional information.



Sharps with biological/infectious contamination-collect in an FDA-approved sharps container bearing the universal biohazard waste symbol. These can be ordered from Fisher Scientific, VWR or a number of other lab suppliers. Please refer to bio-hazardous sharps waste management at <http://biosafety.utk.edu/waste/> or contact Office of Biosafety at 974-5547.



Uncontaminated sharps—Although there are no additional hazards (beyond the physical injury risk) and hazardous waste regulations do not typically address uncontaminated sharps, best practices indicate collecting them as described for biological/infectious sharps. These should be brought to EHS for disposal.

Lab Glassware-Lab glassware can be triple-rinsed and disposed of as non-contaminated glassware, with the exception of empty glassware once containing acutely toxic (p-listed) waste, which must be managed as a hazardous waste (for a list of these substances, visit, <http://web.utk.edu/~ehss/pdf/ahs.pdf>; for guidance on hazardous waste disposal, please contact EHS). Although there are no additional hazards (beyond the physical injury risk), these should still be collected in a puncture-proof container (e.g., plastic container or broken glass box), labeled as broken glass, and taken to the dumpster for disposal. For questions, please contact EHS at 974-5084.

