

TO: Users of sharps in labs and clinics

FROM: Environmental Health and Safety

SUBJECT: Disposing of Sharps

DATE: April 9, 2007

There has been some confusion about which sharp items must be disposed of in sharps containers and which in broken glass boxes. This memo is intended to clear up the confusion.

First, some definitions:

Sharps - Any object that may be *contaminated with an infectious substance*, and is *able to cut or penetrate the skin or packaging material*. The term includes; needles, syringes, scalpels, broken glass, culture slides, culture dishes, broken capillary tubes, broken rigid plastic, and exposed ends of dental wires.

Infectious substance - Materials known to contain or suspected to contain a pathogen with the potential to cause disease upon exposure.

Anything that fits the definition of a **sharp** (*i.e.* infectious **and** able to penetrate skin or packaging) *must* be disposed of in the sharps container.

Items that are not **sharp** but are **infections** must be placed in the red medical waste tubs or cardboard Stericycle boxes. These containers are then shipped by our medical waste hauler. You must have proper training to pack and sign for the removal of these tubs or boxes.



Items that can puncture the trash bags, but are not legally defined as **sharps** (*i.e.* **are not infectious**), should be placed in a broken glass box. This includes things like pipets (whole or broken), needles, broken glass or broken rigid plastic.

Broken glass boxes can be purchased from Fisher or can be any cardboard box. Tape the box **securely shut** and the custodians will take it at *no cost* to you.

Please contact us with any questions.