

Needles and Syringe Disposal Procedure

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1. PURPOSE

- 1.1. This procedure applies to all employees directly employed by Ecoplant & Seeddown and all Business Units and entities owned or managed by Ecoplant & Seeddown.
- 1.2. The purpose of this procedure is to detail the requirements for the safe handling and disposal of needles and syringes (sharps) to ensure that the staff of Ecoplant & Seeddown and others are not harmed.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 2.1. Employees who may, in the performance of their duties, be exposed to needle stick injury, however arising, must be provided with the information and training required to mitigate the risk of injury.
- 2.2. Management are to ensure that needles and syringes are disposed of in the correct fashion. Needles and syringes are to be disposed of in a rigid-walled, puncture-resistant, sealed container.

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1. **Needle Stick Injury** - Needle-stick injuries are wounds caused by needles that accidentally puncture the skin. Injection of blood-borne viruses is the major hazard of needle stick injuries, especially the viruses that cause AIDS (the HIV virus), hepatitis B and hepatitis C.
- 3.2. **Sharps** - The term “sharps” means objects or devices with sharp points, protuberances or cutting edges that are capable of cutting or piercing the skin.
- 3.3. **Sharps Container** - A sharps container is a receptacle intended for the collection and disposal of sharps. It is:
 - rigid-walled;
 - puncture-proof;
 - sealable;
 - yellow in colour;
 - labelled as “sharps” or “infectious waste”; and
 - carries the biohazard and AS/NZS symbols.
- 3.4. **Sharps disposal kit** - The kit should include a sharps container and disposable gloves.

4. REFERENCES

- 4.1. Safety Policy
- 4.2. Relevant WHS legislation

4.3. Relevant Environmental Protection (Waste Management) legislation

5. PROCEDURE

5.1. Prevention / Minimisation

Within Ecoplant & Seeddown, employees must:

- not place their hands into areas or objects where they cannot see, as sharps may be concealed there e.g. overgrown garden beds, rubbish bins;
- use tongs or rubbish grabbers to pick up or move rubbish. NOTE: A rubbish grabber tool is not to be used to pick up sharps;
- not manually compress rubbish bags in case they contain needles/syringes.

5.2. Upon locating a sharp

- 5.2.1. Before handling sharps - move away any people (especially children) who are nearby.
- 5.2.2. Ensure there is space to move and to clearly observe the sharps and your hands.
- 5.2.3. Do not handle more than one (1) item at a time. If there are multiple sharps, carefully separate them using a stick or implement – do not try to flick them or pick them up with a grabber/implement.

5.3. Disposal of needle/syringe into sharps container

- 5.3.1. Isolate/mark the needle or syringe and obtain a sharps disposal kit if available.
Precaution – *ensure that in your absence the sharp will not endanger another person.*
- 5.3.2. Put on disposable latex or vinyl gloves. Gloves will not prevent the wearer from being injured but will form a clean barrier between the hands and the syringe. **Precaution** - *Do not attempt to recap the needle – this is how most accidental needle-stick injuries happen. The cap is usually bright orange and can be disposed of separately. Do not break, bend or otherwise try to render the syringe useless.*
- 5.3.3. Bring the rigid-walled, puncture-resistant, sealable, sharps container to the syringe. **Precaution** - *Take the sharps container to the syringe, do not walk with the needle/syringe.*
- 5.3.4. Place the container on the ground or flat surface beside the syringe.
Precaution - *Do not hold the sharps container or ask another person to hold it as you are disposing of the syringe.*
- 5.3.5. Pick up the syringe by the middle of the barrel. **Precaution** - *The safest method of picking up a syringe is by hand. Staff can also choose to wear thin, disposable gloves that do not hinder dexterity. Do not crack the plastic barrel of the syringe or flick the syringe.*

- 5.3.6. Place the syringe in the container sharp end first. **Precaution** - *Keep the sharp end of the needle facing away from you at all times.*
- 5.3.7. Securely place the lid on the container and ensure it is sealed. Hold the container by the top when carrying. **Precaution** - *Place the sealed container into your sharps disposal bin or contact your local council or health department regarding safe ways to dispose of your sharps container.*
- 5.3.8. Remove gloves carefully so any contaminated fluid on the glove does not come into contact with your hand. Wash your hands with running water and soap. **Precaution** - *Other items that have come into contact with blood (i.e. gloves) should be disposed of in the same container as the used syringe or placed into double plastic bags and then into the rubbish.*

5.4. **Disposal of sharps container**

Most hospitals, chemists or pharmacies offer a free sharps disposal service. Local councils will also recommend disposal locations.

5.5. **If a needle stick injury occurs**

- Stay calm.
- Encourage the wound to bleed (gently squeeze).
- As soon as possible wash the area with running water and soap (if available).
- Apply an antiseptic and Band-Aid.
- As soon as possible contact your Manager/Supervisor.
- It is important to be medically assessed as soon as possible. Visit the local doctor or hospital emergency department promptly. They will manage blood testing, counselling and possible hepatitis B and tetanus vaccination and/or medication.
- Seek counselling if needed.
- Dispose of the needle/syringe safely. Testing of syringes is usually not conducted so there is no need to keep the syringe.

6. **RECORDS**

- 6.1. All documentation must be retained by the Company for a period not less than seven (7) years from the date that the documentation was brought into existence.

7. **REVIEW**

- 7.1. Annual