



# Recommended Steps for the Safe Disposal of Needles or "Sharps" In the District of Columbia

## Problems from Improper Disposal

The improper disposal of contaminated sharps is a serious safety concern for garbage collectors and landfill workers. If improperly thrown in trash bags along with regular trash, these sharps can puncture the bags and cause injury. At this time, the District of Columbia does not have a needle disposal program. We offer these disposal tips as guidance. Check with your doctor, clinic, or hospital to see about a needle or "sharps" disposal program at their office. The Department of Public Works does not accept needles or "sharps" at its weekly Household Hazardous Waste program.

## Disposal of Needles or "Sharps"



- Prevent injury, illness and pollution by following these simple steps to dispose of sharp needles and contaminated materials used when administering home health care. We want to keep you, your family, and trash collection crews safe.
- Place needles, syringes, lancets and other contaminated sharps in any puncture-resistant, resealable, disposable household container (examples include an empty bleach bottle, laundry detergent bottle, or metal coffee can). We recommend choosing a container that has a small opening so no one can stick his or her hand into it.
- Using a **RED** marker, write on the container ~ "**BIOHAZARD-DO NOT RECYCLE.**" The color Red is required to indicate a biohazard waste. Used needles and other contaminated sharps are NOT recyclable.
- Do not recap, purposely bend, break, or otherwise manipulate needles before inserting them into the disposal container. Drop all parts into the container.
- Once your container is full of used needles, fill the container with one part bleach solution and ten parts of water. Allow solution to soak for 20 minutes; this action will sterilize your used sharps. Then, pour the solution into the sink and seal the cap with tape before placing the disposal container into the garbage. Use heavy-duty tape (such as duct tape).
- Dispose of the container in your regular trash but do NOT use glass or clear plastic containers.
- Be sure to keep all containers with discarded sharps out of reach of children and pets.
- We recommend you place any soiled bandages, disposable sheets and medical gloves separately in securely fastened plastic bags before placing them along with your other trash. Never share used needles.

For more information call: 202-481-3838

