

Why Are Needles Dangerous?

Our collection employees have encountered an increased amount of loose needles and/or medical waste mixed in with garbage, yard waste and/or recycling material on their routes. We have also noticed a substantial increase in the frequency and number of loose needles coming into our recycling facility where our employees manually sort materials.

Improperly disposed needles and medical waste pose serious health and safety risks to workers who collect and/or sort waste. Needle stick injuries and contact with medical waste place our employees at risk for contracting diseases such as HIV and Hepatitis.



Therefore, we are asking you to assist us by properly disposing of needles. We highly recommend you utilize one or more of the following alternative needle disposal options in lieu of disposing of needles with your garbage.

EPA's Safe Options for Home Needle Disposal

Needle / Syringe Exchange Programs

These programs let you trade used needles for new ones. The group that runs the service will dispose of your used needles safely. We recommend you contact your physician's office or pharmacy regarding availability of these programs.

Mail Back Service

These services provide a needle container and mail-back packaging. You fill the needle container with your used needles and mail it back in the package that is provided by the company. In some cases, you may have to pay for this service and the price usually depends on the size of the container you select.

Home Needle Destruction Devices

Several manufacturers offer products for sale that allow you to destroy needles at home by burning, melting or cutting off the needle—making it safe to throw in the garbage. Prices vary depending on the product.

Community Services

Some communities offer services such as drop-off sites, household hazardous waste centers, and special waste pickup services. These services may not be available in all areas. Please check with your local community to find out if these services are available.

Where Can I Find More Information?

Ask your health care provider or local pharmacist if they can dispose of your used needles or if they know of safe disposal programs near you.

Check the Centers for Disease Control website at (www.cdc.gov/needledisposal) for a list of needle disposal rules in your state, along with needle disposal programs near you.

Visit the Earth 911 website at (www.earth911.org). You can go to the "Household Hazardous Waste" section of the site and search for a needle disposal program near you by entering your zip code.

To learn more about the rules regarding waste disposal, consult the EPA's Medical Waste website at (www.epa.gov/epawaste/index.htm).

Contact the **North American Syringe Exchange Program** at (253) 272-4857 or visit the website at www.nasen.org.

For a list of **mail-back services**, contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at (800) 643-1643 or visit the website at (www.safeneedledisposal.org).

When contacting the mail back service company, be sure to ask them if the service is approved by the U.S. Postal Service.

Contact the Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal at (800) 643-1643 or visit the website at www.safeneedledisposal.org for a list of companies that make **home needle destruction devices**.

*** **IMPORTANT!** If, after reviewing these needle disposal options, you find that the only feasible option for you is to dispose of them with your regular household waste, we ask that you use the following procedures:

- Place needles in rigid containers (e.g., plastic laundry detergent bottles, coffee cans, etc.) and secure the top/lid on the container with heavy duty tape (e.g., duct tape).

- Label container, "Do not recycle".

- Dispose of container in garbage. **DO NOT PLACE IN RECYCLE BINS OR YARD WASTE CONTAINERS.**

