

Do slides and test tubes need to be stored, transported and disposed of as sharps?

Yes.

The law specifies that liquid or soluble semi-solid biological wastes may be discharged into a sewage treatment system that provides secondary treatment of waste. Is it also permissible to discharge this type of waste into a septic tank system?

Yes.

The law specifically states that body parts must be incinerated or disposed of in the same manner as cultures and stocks, if the Environmental Quality Commission (EQC) determines that incineration is not reasonably available. In some cases a patient may request that a body part (e.g., tonsils, gallstones) be given to them, following removal. Is this permissible?

Yes. In this case, the body part that has been removed becomes the property of the patient and thus does not enter the waste stream.

Is it acceptable to send sharps that have not been incinerated, autoclaved or otherwise treated by approved methods to a landfill for disposal?

Yes. The EQC has adopted rules which allow for **non-compacted** sharps containers to be landfilled without prior treatment. The sharps must be contained in a leakproof, rigid, puncture-resistant container which is tightly closed or lidded to prevent loss of contents.

For more information contact:

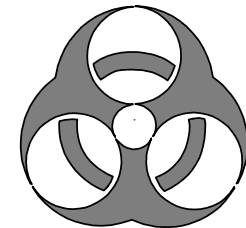
- *your health care provider*
- *your local health department*



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Infectious Waste Disposal

Questions and Answers



In 1989, the Oregon legislature passed a bill which provides for regulation of infectious waste collection, transportation, storage, treatment and disposal. This bill was passed in the interest of public health and safety. This brochure is intended to answer some of the most commonly asked questions pertaining to ORS 459.386 through 459.405 and Oregon Administrative Rules 333-056-010 through 333-056-050 on infectious waste. If you have any additional questions, you should contact your local health department.

What are the basic provisions of the law and regulations?

The law defines four basic kinds of infectious waste: pathological waste, biological waste, cultures and stocks, and sharps.

- Pathological wastes must be incinerated except as noted below.
- Biological wastes must be incinerated, autoclaved or treated by other methods approved by the Oregon Health Services. As noted below, liquid or soluble semi-solid biological wastes may be discharged into a sewage treatment system that provides secondary treatment or into a septic tank system.
- Sharps must be incinerated, autoclaved, or treated by other methods approved by Oregon Health Services. They may be taken without other treatment to a landfill in a rigid, puncture-resistant, leakproof container, as long as the container is segregated from other waste, is transported without compaction, and is placed in a segregated area of the landfill. Sharps containers may also be accepted at Metro transfer stations.

Are disposable materials that are contaminated with blood or other body fluids considered to be infectious waste?

Materials contaminated with blood or other body fluids are considered to be subject to the infectious waste law only if they are saturated with blood or body fluid. Saturated means that the fluid will ooze or drip out with or without compaction. In other words, blood-stained bandages or dressings and sanitary napkins are not considered infectious waste.

When did the infectious waste law become effective?

July 1, 1990.

To whom does the law apply? Are infectious waste generators who produce less than 50 pounds per month exempt from the law?

The law applies to **all generators** of infectious waste, from the diabetic living in a private residence to the physician's office to the large metropolitan hospital. Generators who produce less than 50 pounds of infectious waste **are exempt** from 3 specific portions of the law (section 5(5)(7) and (8)).

1. Compliance with **storage** time and **temperature** standards developed by the Oregon Health Services.
2. Compliance with the area of the law which states that secondary infectious waste containers be marked with the international biohazard symbol and the words "Bio Medical Waste." **Exemption from this requirement does not mean, however, that the generator is exempt from segregating infectious waste from other types of waste (e.g., household waste).**
3. Compliance with the requirement that reusable containers be thoroughly washed and decontaminated each time the container is emptied.

Who regulates infectious waste disposal?

Three state agencies regulate various portions of the law: Oregon DHS Health Services, the Department of Environmental Quality and the Oregon Department of Transportation. You should familiarize yourself with the administrative rules of each of these agencies. Metro also regulates treated and untreated infectious waste in the Portland Metropolitan area.

Do linens soiled with blood and/or other body fluids need to be treated as infectious waste?

No. Linens are reused and therefore do not enter the waste stream. Proper handling and laundering (according to Centers for Disease Control and Occupational Safety and Health Administration guidelines) should be continued, however.

Do unused needles or needles that have not come into contact with a patient (e.g., needles used only to puncture IV line ports or medicine vials) have to be treated as infectious waste?

Yes. Needles present an injury hazard to health care personnel and waste workers. Therefore, they should be stored, transported and disposed of in the same manner as needles used in direct patient care.