



INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Laboratory Safety Guideline

Sharps

Introduction

Several types of sharps are used in laboratories. These include:

- Syringe needles, razor blades, surgical blades, Exacto knives, etc.
- Broken glass beakers, flasks, test tubes, etc.
- Disposable glass and plastic pipettes, burettes, etc.

Although they are technically not “sharps”, disposable pipettes, tips, and other pointed disposable objects can perforate the plastic liner of a waste can and pose an unknown threat to the custodial staff especially if they are contaminated with laboratory chemicals or other materials.

Handling

- Syringes, needles, razor blades, other sharps, and broken glass must be handled and stored carefully to avoid injury.
- Appropriate hand protection should be used when picking up broken glass or other sharp objects. Small pieces should be swept up using a brush and dustpan.
- Never allow sharps to fall into cup sinks in fume hoods and bench tops. If that should happen, use gloves and tweezers and carefully remove them from the cup sink.
- Put re-useable sharps away at the end of the work period. Place in appropriate containers and in a drawer or cabinet. **DO NOT** leave sharps on benches, in fume hoods, window sills, or other “convenient” locations exposed to other workers.



Disposal

- **DO NOT** overfill sharps containers. When they are full. Close and seal the lid, make sure it is labeled appropriately, and begin to fill a new container.
- Disposable pipettes, tips, and other materials that may puncture a waste can liner should be placed in a box, jar, thick plastic bag, or other secondary container, and labeled “Non-Hazardous Waste” prior to placement into the waste receptacle.
- All broken glassware that cannot be repaired should be rinsed thoroughly and collected in a suitable-sized, hard plastic receptacle labeled “BROKEN GLASSWARE.” The custodial staff will discard the contents of these containers.
- All sharps (needles, razors, etc), regardless of contamination, should be placed in puncture resistant cardboard boxes or plastic containers.
- Sharps and glassware that are contaminated with chemicals should be collected in puncture-resistant containers and labeled as “Sharps” and “CCI” (Chemically Contaminated Items). Sharps should be picked up by EH&S by appointment or delivered to Open House for disposal.



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- All sharps and glassware contaminated with biological materials must be discarded according to the procedures outlined in the *Biohazardous Waste Disposal* policy found in the *Hazardous Waste Disposal Guide*. Sharps containers are sold in chemistry stores, the biology stock room and laboratory supply catalogues.

Note: Red biohazard sharps containers are to be used **only** for biohazardous waste. Regulatory requirements prohibit disposal by the same means as chemically contaminated sharps.

- All sharps and glassware contaminated with radioactive materials must be discarded according to procedures outlined in Indiana University's *Radiation Safety Manual*.

Containers

Red sharps containers are used only for biologically contaminated sharps. They are available from the Biology and Chemistry Stockrooms and commercial vendors.

Removal of the biohazard symbol does not allow red containers to be used for other types of sharps. The red plastic containers are recognized as medical waste only and cannot be disposed of in the sanitary waste.

All other sharps (plain sharps, chemically contaminated, and radioactive sharps) must be placed in non-red puncture resistant containers and labeled appropriately. One-gallon and quart size plain plastic bottles can be provided upon request.

Broken glass (and empty bottles) can be placed in 5-gallon buckets or commercially available broken glass boxes. The containers must be labeled "Sharp Non-Hazardous Waste" or "Broken Glass."

Avoid using large size boxes and filling them to capacity. Once the boxes are full they can be very heavy which makes them difficult and dangerous to move. The five-gallon bucket capacity is recommended.

