

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
Bureau of Land Recycling and Waste Management

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TITLE: Infectious Waste Definition Clarification Of Human And Animal Blood And Other Body Fluid Waste

AUTHORITY: This document is established in accordance with The Solid waste Management Act, Act of July 1980, P.L. 380, No. 97, as amended, P.S. 6018.1 .1003 and the Infectious and Chemotherapeutic Waste Disposal Act, Act of July 13, 1988, P.L. 522, No. 93, 6019.1.6.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Bureau of Waste Management that the following criteria and standards should be used when determining if waste containing blood, blood products, or body fluids from humans or animals is infectious waste. The policy also clarifies the requirements which apply to waste in the “isolation waste” category of the definition. Furthermore, guidance is provided for interpreting the term “plastic ware” in the category “used sharps” of the infectious waste definition.

PURPOSE: This policy provides guidance in segregating infectious waste at the point origin, if the waste falls in one of the following o categories of the infectious waste definition: blood and body fluid wastes; animal wastes; isolation wastes; and used sharps.

APPLICABILITY: This directive applies to infectious waste generators, transporters, storage, and processing facilities including any person, municipality, or facility involved in managing infectious waste as per the Infectious and Chemotherapeutic Waste Management Regulations of April 9, 1988, and as amended on August 8, 1992.

DISCLAIMER: The policies and procedures outlined in this guidance are intended to supplement existing requirements. Nothing in the policies or procedures shall affect regulatory requirements.

The policies and procedures herin are not an adjudication or a regulation. There is no intent on the part of DEP to give the rules in these policies that weight or deference. This document establishes the framework within which DEP will exercise its administrative discretion in the future. DEP reserves the discretion to deviate from this policy statement if circumstances warrant..

PAGE LENGTH: 4 pages

LOCATION: Volume 06, Tab 24

SCOPE

This directive applies to municipal and residual waste facilities that generate waste as a result of one or more of the activities identified in the definition of infectious waste which are as follows: diagnosis, treatment, immunization, or autopsy of humans or animals or research pertaining thereto, preparing human or animal remains for interment or cremation or in the production or testing of biologicals.

This directive provides guidance to generators to assist them in determining whether waste items are infectious waste and fall in one or more of the categories (C)VII & VIII - Human blood and body fluid waste, (D) - Animal wastes, (E) - Isolation wastes, and (F) - Used Sharps of the infectious waste definition.

PROCEDURES

a) Infectious waste (I) (C) - Human blood and body fluid waste:

- 1) (C) (III) & (IV) require that waste items be saturated or dripping with human blood or caked with dried human blood including serum, plasma, and other blood components to be classified as infectious waste. On the other hand, (C) (VII) considers waste items, contaminated by human body fluids from surgery, autopsy, other medical or laboratory procedures to be infectious waste.

The regulations do not define the term “contaminated” in relation to human body fluids other than blood. As a result, in order to allow for the logical implementation of the above stated regulatory provisions, all items “contaminated” with human body fluids must be saturated or dripping or dried and caked with such body fluids to be classified as infectious waste. The Department has taken this position because the body fluid of most concern, due the potential for disease transmission, is blood. As a result, requiring a more stringent management practice for body fluids other than blood was viewed as inappropriate. However, requiring the same management standard for blood and other body fluids was deemed protective of both worker and public health.

- 2) (C)(VIII), furthermore, defines specimens of blood products or body fluids, and their containers as infectious waste. This is to be interpreted to mean that, when these containers are discarded with the biological specimen(s) contained in them, they are to be managed as infectious waste.

In many instances, these used containers may also meet the description in the category C(III) of the infectious waste definition, namely “items saturated or dripping with human blood”. When the biological specimens contained in the containers are discharged into the sewer system (in accordance with Section 273.511(c)), the empty containers must be managed as infectious waste. However, in some situations, these containers could still fall into the category “used sharps” of the definition, as “...and other broken or unbroken glass or plastic ware” provided they contained blood, blood products, or other specified body fluids.

b) Infectious waste (D) Animal wastes:

This category in the infectious waste definition applies to wastes “contaminated” with blood, blood products, secretions, and excretions from animals that are known to have been exposed to zoonotic or nonzoonotic human pathogens. For purposes of implementing this portion of the infectious waste definition, the term “contaminated” means (as stated above) those items which are saturated, dripping, or caked with dried animal blood, blood products, or body fluids.

c) Infectious waste (E) Isolation wastes:

This category of the infectious waste definition applies to biological wastes and wastes “contaminated” with blood, excretion, exudates, or secretions from humans or animals, who are isolated to protect others from the highly virulent nature of their disease(s).

Due to the virulence of Class IV etiologic agents of concern, for purposes of implementing this portion of the infectious waste definition, the term “contaminated” shall mean any amount of the above stated materials contained on or in such waste items. This means lightly soiled items, as well as, items which are saturated, dripping or caked with dried blood and specified body fluids.

D Infectious waste (F) Used sharps:

Category (F) requires that broken and unbroken glass and plastic ware that have been in contact with infectious agents or used in animal or human patient care or treatment be managed as infectious waste. The term “plastic ware” is to be interpreted to mean items made from plastic polymers which shatter on breakage or would be considered breakable, thus creating sharps capable of skin punctures in those who may come in contact with them. If used “plastic ware” is made of a plastic polymer which does not shatter on breakage or is considered unbreakable, it would not be considered a used sharp. However, this “plastic ware” would still be required to be managed as infectious waste if through its use it has been in contact with infectious agents. Therefore, rinsing glass or plastic containers, used for specimens of blood or body fluids, does not overcome their management as infectious waste.

Used plastic ware made of polyethylene (PE), poly vinyl chloride(PVC), and other thermoplastic polymers, provided they do not shatter on breakage and would be considered unbreakable, are not considered “used sharps” under category (F).

REFERENCES

25 Pa. Code 271.1