



UCCS SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURE

51. SAFE HANDLING AND DISPOSING OF NON-INFECTIOUS SHARPS

(For assistance, please contact [Environmental Health & Safety](#))

Sharps are any items that can easily puncture the skin. Examples include glass, pipette tips, razor blades, needles, and other objects that can penetrate the skin. All sharps must be handled and disposed in a manner that protects individuals from possible injury. An improperly disposed sharp poses a threat of injury to others. FOR SHARPS WHICH HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO HUMAN BLOOD OR TISSUE, or which have been used in working with biohazardous materials refer to the ***Biohazardous, Infectious and Medical Waste SOP 5.***

- Substitute plastic ware for glassware whenever possible.
- **Routinely inspect glassware** and remove items from service that are damaged, starred, cracked, or chipped.
- **Do not handle broken glass with bare hands** -- use tongs, brooms and dustpans, or similar equipment.
- **Do not leave unprotected sharps (i.e., razor blades, scalpel tips, etc.) on bench tops.**
- **Do not store sharps, including forceps, loose in a drawer.** Lacerations can occur when an employee reaches into a drawer and comes in contact with an unsecured sharp. Forceps tips can be protected in a small piece of tubing. Other sharps should be kept in their original packaging whenever possible.
- **Use needle syringes only when absolutely necessary.** If a needle syringe is absolutely necessary to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically re-sheathes the needle.
- **Never try to recap the needle of a syringe.** You might accidentally puncture yourself.
- If you must use a needle syringe and plan to use the same needle syringe repeatedly during a procedure, **do not lay the needle syringe on the bench top or try to recap the needle.** Instead, keep the needle cap in a piece of Styrofoam. Between steps you can place the needle and syringe into the cap while keeping your other hand behind your back. Following this procedure, you will puncture the Styrofoam instead of your other hand if you miss the cap. Plastic culture tubes can also be used to hold a syringe between steps in a procedure.
- **Used needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes,** or otherwise manipulated by hand before disposal.
- **In the event of a needle stick injury,** seek medical attention immediately. Contact your supervisor and [Risk Management](#) to file an [Accidental Injury Report](#).

Disposal

- **Appropriate (rigid, leak and puncture proof, sealable, and “Sharps” labeled) containers must be available in the immediate work area.**
- Place the sealed container in the regular trash.¹
- **For locations that generate large quantities of broken glass,** a designated “BROKEN GLASSWARE ONLY” trash container may be used.
- **REMEMBER** IF SHARPS ARE CONTAMINATED WITH A BIOHAZARDOUS OR POTENTIALLY INFECTIOUS MATERIAL, OR HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH HUMAN BLOOD OR TISSUE, YOU **MUST** FOLLOW THE PROCEDURES IN THE ***BIOHAZARDOUS, INFECTIOUS AND MEDICAL WASTE SOP.***

¹ Even when non-infectious, broken glass, needles, knives, razor blades and other “sharps” can be hazardous to persons handling trash. For this reason, if at all possible, turn “sharps” over to a facility with appropriate sharps disposal containers (Student Health Clinic, Beth-El College of Nursing and Health Science, Biology).