

MEDICAL WASTE TREATMENT GUIDANCE

Currently, there are no specific rules or guidelines for the handling, treatment, and disposal of medical/infectious wastes in the State. In addition, state regulations do not specifically define medical or infectious waste, but these wastes do meet the state definition of solid waste. Chapter 1, Section 1(l)(xx) of the solid waste rules exempts "Medical waste storage units, incinerators, autoclaves, or other treatment devices, used to store or treat only medical wastes which are generated by the owner or operator of the medical facility or by doctor's offices, medical clinics, dental offices and other medical waste generators within the county or local area where the medical waste storage units, incinerators, autoclaves or other treatment devices are located."

In general, the department recommends the following handling procedures for medical waste prior to transporting or disposing those wastes at a sanitary landfill. Please be advised that the landfill operator determines whether or not the waste is accepted for disposal at their facility.

1. Infectious wastes generated at hospitals should be rendered non-infectious by incineration, autoclaving or other acceptable treatment method. Medical wastes generated by clinical laboratories, doctors' offices, veterinary clinics, nursing homes, emergency care facilities or other medical facilities can be disposed at landfills. Any body parts generated at these facilities should be incinerated prior to disposal.

2. Place medical wastes in "red-bags" for proper identification of the waste to ensure handler safety and avoid potential exposure. Medical waste generators should contact the local refuse collection authority and the landfill operator to alert them that infectious wastes are being handled. This might require a medical waste generator to bring the red bagged wastes to a central collection point, or to the landfill; alternately, a city collection truck could make special arrangements to pick up red-bagged wastes periodically or as needed. Sharps should be adequately contained in rigid containers and identified.

To obtain a solid waste treatment permit for a commercial medical/infectious waste management facility (one not meeting the above exemption), the operator must address the requirements of Chapter 1 (General Provisions), Chapter VI (Transfer, Treatment, and Storage Regulations), and Chapter 7 (Financial Assurance) of the solid waste rules. In addition, the department has promulgated rules for the storage and treatment of low hazard/low volume wastes. These new requirements may apply to certain, non-exempted medical/infectious waste management practices. Further, the department has developed a policy for mobile treatment units that manage solid wastes including medical/infectious wastes. Finally, emergency or one-time waste management authorizations are used by the department in those circumstances when waste management (treatment, storage, disposal) is a limited, non-recurring event not warranting the above permitting requirements.

With regard to the disposal of medical/infectious wastes, the department has reviewed the Environmental Protection Agency publication entitled "EPA Guide for Infectious Waste

Management", May 1986 (EPA/530-SW86-014), and is in agreement with the recommendations contained in this document. A copy of the document can be obtained by writing to:

National Technical Information Service
5285 Port Royal Road
Springfield, VA 22161
Telephone: (703) 487-4650
NTIS Order Number PB86-199130

With regard to requirements placed on the generators of medical/infectious wastes (e.g. - hospitals, clinical laboratories, nursing and health care facilities, etc.) the Wyoming Division of Health and Medical Services has published standards, rules, and regulations which generally require such institutions to establish and follow acceptable plans controlling the collection, handling, segregation, treatment, and disposal of medical/infectious wastes. They can be contacted at:

Wyoming Division of Health and Medical Services
Hathaway Building
4th Floor
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Telephone: (307) 777-7121

Currently, there are no commercial medical/infectious waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities within the state. Most facilities operate under the exemption described above and manage only the wastes they generate or that are received from a relatively small universe of local medical/infectious waste generators.

Questions regarding the transportation of medical/infectious wastes should be directed to:

Wyoming Transportation Department
5300 Bishop Blvd.
Cheyenne, WY 82002
Telephone: (307) 777-4375

Hazardous wastes are regulated by this office under the Wyoming State Hazardous Waste Rules and Regulations. Should you have any questions regarding the State requirements, please feel free to contact the SHWD at (307) 777-7752.