



## WHATCOM COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

### Solid Waste Program

509 Girard Street

Bellingham, WA 98225

Phone: (360) 676-6724 Fax: (360) 676-7646

[www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/health)

## Recommendations for Disposal of Residential Sharps

When disposed of improperly, discarded sharps pose a health risk to the public; particularly solid waste workers who may suffer a needlestick injury. Needlestick injuries increase the risk of exposure to infectious bloodborne diseases such as Hepatitis B & C, and HIV from contaminated needles and may require expensive testing.

Whatcom County Solid Waste Rules currently allow the disposal of residential sharps into household garbage cans when the sharps are properly packaged and labeled. Residential sharps are hypodermic needles, syringes with needles attached, scalpels, blades, and lancets that are generated from self-treatment.



To minimize the risk of a needlestick injury, the following recommendations for the proper disposal of residential sharps should be followed.

1. Label an empty PET (polyethylene terephthalate) plastic two-liter pop bottle with the warning: **DO NOT RECYCLE: CONTAINS USED SYRINGES**. Download and print the warning sticker from the Environmental Health webpage [www.co.whatcom.wa.us/Health/services/Environmental\\_Health/biomedwaste/biomedwaste.htm](http://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/Health/services/Environmental_Health/biomedwaste/biomedwaste.htm) by clicking on recommendations for disposal of residential sharps or obtain one from Environmental Health. If you don't have access to a warning sticker, label the bottle with a permanent marker. Place used syringes in the bottle. When the bottle is full, screw the cap on and seal it with tape. Dispose of the filled, sealed bottle in your household garbage.
  - DO NOT place the bottle in your recycling bin. Sharps are not recyclable.
  - DO NOT add bleach to the container. Bleach may not completely disinfect the needles and it could spill and injure you or solid waste workers.
2. Clip the needle points using a "needle clipper" that contains the needle portion of the syringe inside the clipping device. The clipped syringe can go into your household garbage as well as the needle clipper when it's full. Be sure to clip the entire needle portion of the syringe. Needle clippers can be purchased at some local pharmacies.



3. Use a mail-away sharps disposal program. Approved United States Postal Service sharps containers can be purchased from some medical waste disposal companies. When you purchase the container you are also paying for the disposal of the full container when you are ready to return it. Simply fill the sharps container and mail it back in the box provided. Contact Environmental Health at 676-6724 for information on mail away service providers.