



TECHNICAL UPDATE

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PROPER HANDLING OF TRASH

CTSI has recently received several injury claims resulting from the improper disposal and handling of trash. Dangerous materials such as broken glass, metal pieces, human waste, or used needles have seen an increase in incidents. County employees whose job duties include handling and emptying trash should wear personal protective equipment and take proper safety precautions.

ENCOUNTERING NEEDLES

Needlestick injuries are a hidden epidemic, with many of the CDC-estimated 600,000-800,000 incidents a year going unreported. Handling needles or syringes in the trash requires special care to prevent injuries and the potential spread of infections. If you find yourself in a situation where you need to dispose of needles, consider the following tips:

- **Use a Sharps Container:** The safest way to dispose of needles is by using a dedicated sharps container, which can be obtained from pharmacies or local health departments. Label "Biohazard" to alert others about its content.
- **Do Not Recycle Needles:** Syringes and needles should never be placed in recycling bins. They can cause injuries to waste management workers and complicate the recycling process.
- **Dispose of Sharps Containers Properly:** Check local regulations for the proper disposal of containers. Some areas allow for drop-off at designated collection sites, while others may have specific instructions for disposal.

If you have been stuck by a needle while handling trash, it is important to seek medical attention immediately and report the incident to your supervisor.

TIPS FOR HANDLING TRASH

Individuals handling trash should wear gloves, and if handling infectious materials, they should wear eye protection or face masks. They should also follow these guidelines for safety:

- Do not allow trash containers to get more than three-quarters full.
- Do not push down on the bag to remove air.
- Clean up spilled food or liquids immediately to prevent slips or falls.
- Place broken glass and plastic in designated waste containers.
- Evacuate the area if there is a strong odor or visible damage and notify emergency services.
- Report the presence of hazardous materials to your local waste management or environmental authorities.

Under no circumstances should you dispose of hazardous waste in regular trash bins or down drains. Improper disposal can lead to environmental contamination and pose risks to waste management personnel. If you are unsure about the nature of the hazardous material or how to handle it, contact professional hazardous waste disposal services. They have the expertise and equipment to manage such situations safely.

REMOVING A TRASH BAG

To remove a plastic bag from a trash container, tie the bag at the top before removing it from the trash can. Then tip the waste container slightly to the side to reduce suction and make the bag easier to remove. The bag should not be lifted straight out of the container to help prevent back strain. Use a two-wheeled dolly to move trash bags to the dumpster. Avoid allowing the bag to come into contact with your body in case it contains sharp objects.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

Remember that waste handling is a shared responsibility. By adopting these tips, you contribute to a cleaner and more sustainable environment. CTSI offers a webinar on handling Bloodborne Pathogens as part of its MSHA courses available at www.ctsi.org. The webinar covers best practices for disposing of infectious materials. County employees should wear PPE and take proper precautions when handling trash. For more information, contact CTSI Loss Prevention at (303) 861-0507.