

GUIDANCE FOR SOLID WASTE HANDLING AND

BIOMEDICAL WASTE HANDLING - COVID-19

APRIL 8, 2020 Skagit County Public Health

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for health care facilities and solid waste handlers to differentiate waste streams that come into contact with COVID-19 patients in order to clearly identify which wastes are appropriate for the municipal waste streams and which wastes are identified as biomedical waste as defined in local, state, and federal regulations.

Municipal Solid Waste Handling and Management Considerations for COVID-19

- Workers and employers should manage municipal solid waste with potential or known COVID-19 contamination like any other non-contaminated municipal waste.
- Use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face and eye protection including safety glasses, to prevent exposure to the waste, including any contaminants in the materials.
- Such measures can help protect workers from sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.
- Do not touch your face.
- Wash your hands frequently when possible or use alcohol-based sanitizer as an alternative if handwashing is not available.
- Do not come to work if you feel sick.

What is Biomedical Waste?

- Waste with blood, excretions, exudates, or secretions from humans or animals with biosafety level 4 pathogens
Note: According to current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) information, COVID-19 is NOT at biosafety level 4.
- Human blood and blood components and materials containing free-flowing blood and blood products.
- Sharps that have been used in animal or human patients such as needles and syringes, IV tubing, scalpel blades, and lancets that have been removed from the original sterile package.
- Cultures and stocks of infectious agents to humans and laboratory waste that has come into contact with cultures and stocks of etiologic agents or blood specimens.
- Pathological wastes such as human tissues, organs, body parts and body fluids that are removed during surgery, procedures and autopsy
- Animal waste that are known to be infected with or that have been inoculated with pathogens infectious to humans

Common Healthcare Wastes That Are Not Biomedical Waste

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) of health care workers e.g. disposable gloves, gown, and respiratory protection
- Spent dust filters
- Textile wastes e.g. bedding, towels, and clothing
- Human blood and blood products that are absorbed by materials such as bandages, napkins or commercial absorbents that fluid will not be released from the material and/or become airborne

While the above items are not biomedical waste, all of the above wastes need to be securely bagged and contained before placing in the solid waste receptacle.

Who is a Biomedical Waste Generator?

Home-generated biomedical waste is excluded from the definition of biomedical waste generator.

Businesses and industries that are considered biomedical waste generators include but are not limited to the following:

General acute care hospitals	Community clinics
Surgical clinics	Health maintenance organizations
Urgent care clinics	Laboratories
Intermediate care facilities	Medical buildings
Acute psychiatric hospitals	Physicians' offices and clinics
Skilled nursing facility or convalescent hospitals	Dental offices and clinics
In-patient care facilities for the developmentally disabled	Funeral homes
Chronic dialysis clinics	Veterinary offices and clinics

What Does a Biomedical Waste Generator Need To Do?

As a biomedical waste generator, the generator is required to do the following:

- Segregate biomedical waste from other wastes at the point of origin
- Properly label, and contain biomedical waste while stored by the generator
- Have biomedical waste routinely collected, transported and disposed by a regulated biomedical waste disposal vendor, if not treated onsite

Each biomedical waste generator should have a biomedical waste management plan which establishes clear procedures for waste identification, segregation, containment, transport, treatment, treatment monitoring, and disposal. The generator should identify individuals within the organization that are responsible for compliance, record keeping and ensuring that staff are periodically trained on the plan.

Who should I contact if you have questions, concerns, or want to report mishandling?

Please contact Skagit County Public Health at 360-416-1500 and ask to speak with the Environmental Health Program.

References and Resources:

OSHA guidance for solid waste workers and employers:

<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html#solidwaste>

Chapter 70.95K RCW: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70.95K>

Skagit County Code 12.16:

<https://www.codepublishing.com/WA/SkagitCounty/#!/SkagitCounty12/SkagitCounty1216.html#12.16>

CDC Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html>

OSHA Safety and Health Topics COVID-19: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html>

CDC COVID-19 Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/caring-for-patients.html>