



# Site Policy On Needles And Syringes

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## 1. PRINCIPLE

Used needles and syringes disposed of on building sites are an occupational health and safety hazard that must be removed immediately and in a safe manner.

## 2. FOCUS

- (a) A safe and effective means of removing syringes from building sites.
- (b) A procedure in case of needle stick injury.
- (c) Provision of education and resources regarding HIV/AIDS and other blood borne diseases, drug and alcohol use and the safe handling and disposal of used needles and syringes.

### 3. POLICY

- (a) If a needle or syringe is discovered on site it shall be treated in exactly the same manner as any other site safety problem.
- (b) No one shall work in the immediate area around a syringe until the syringe has been safely disposed of by the appropriate personnel.
- (c) The appropriate personnel for collection of syringes and arranging for their disposal shall be the person responsible for First Aid on site; or in case of that person not being available any person with First Aid or Safety Training shall be deemed appropriate.
- (d) On high risk sites the First Aid person or other appropriate person shall inspect the areas of the site deemed necessary daily before the commencement of work and remove any syringes discovered. Areas to be inspected daily will be determined by the site safety committee. Should a syringe be discovered when or after work commences section 3(a) and 3(c) of this procedure shall occur.
- (e) When a syringe is discovered on a low to medium risk site it will be removed by the appropriate person and recorded in the site safety records. The appropriate person shall then continue to inspect and monitor the site/work area.
- (f) There will be no lost time as a result of the discovery of a syringe as long as this policy is strictly adhered to, but this in no way excludes all parties from their safety obligations under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.
- (g) All site inductions shall contain information on drug and alcohol safety in the workplace, outlining the “Not at Work, Mate” program, and the mechanics of this policy.
- (h) On any low to medium risk sites where syringes are discovered, The Construction & Other Industries Drugs & Alcohol Program Inc. Education Officer shall conduct regular on site inductions (refer to point g) for all on site personnel (workers and management).
- (i) On any site where a syringe or syringes are discovered, all efforts will be made to maximise and improve perimeter security and fencing.

## 4. INFORMATION ABOUT AIDS

HIV, the virus that causes AIDS dies quickly when exposed to air and light. The amount of Blood left inside, or on the surface of a used needle or syringe is very small. There would probably not be enough to cause HIV infection if you were pricked. So the chance of being infected with HIV from a used syringe is extremely low.

There is however greater risks of being infected with Hepatitis C, which like HIV, cannot be vaccinated against. Other diseases that can be caught from dirty needles are Hepatitis A and B, and Tetanus. You can be vaccinated against these by your local doctor. So, be careful. By following these guide-lines you protect the safety of your co-workers, your family and yourself.

## 5. IF YOU FIND A SYRINGE ON SITE

**Follow the site procedure.**

- (a) Inform the site Safety Committee. If your site has no Safety Committee inform the person responsible for First Aid on site.
- (b) Do not move the syringe yourself. This should be done by someone with either First Aid or Safety training.
- (c) Work around the syringe or isolate the immediate area until it is removed.

## 6. SITE PROCEDURE FOR SAFELY DISPOSING OF USED SYRINGES

- (a) The appropriate person to remove discarded syringes from site is the person responsible for First Aid on site. If that person is unavailable any person who has had first aid or safety training shall be considered appropriate. Rank and file workers with no training should not pick up discarded syringes.
- (b) Wear gloves, they will protect you from infectious material, but will not protect you from being pricked by the needle.
- (c) Before doing anything, have an approved sharps container ready to put the syringe into. If an approved sharps container is not available, an impenetrable container with a lid is the next best thing.
- (d) Place the container on a flat, stable surface - don't hold the container with your hands. Gently place the syringe, needle end first into the container.
- (e) Pick up the syringe either by using tongs or an "ezy hold" mechanical hand. If you must pick it up by hand, make sure you are wearing gloves and hold it by the plastic barrel, with the needle end pointing away from you.
- (f) Never put the cap back on a needle used by someone else. Also never try to blunt the needle or break it off.
- (g) To arrange for collection of needles or if your syringe disposal bin is full and needs replacing, contact your local needle and syringe exchange or the Alcohol and Drug Information Service (ADIS) on 1300 13 1340. A spare empty disposal bin should be kept on site at all times.
- (h) Where there is a continuing problem with syringes being discovered on site the Construction & Other Industries Drug & Alcohol Program Inc. can arrange for your site to be supplied with approved syringe disposal bins or packs. Contact us on (08) 8373 0122 or 0418 847 180 to make arrangements. You can also contact ADIS directly on 1300 13 1340.

## 7. IN CASE OF NEEDLESTICK INJURY

- Don't panic!
- Allow the wound to bleed a little.
- As soon as possible wash the wound with soap and cold running water.
- Cover the wound with a band aid.
- Attend the First Aid Shed and notify the safety committee.
- For further information, contact Sexual Health Clinic or Community Health Centre



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