



# ADMINISTRATIVE Policy

Title:	Sharps Safety	Number:	AD-OHS-005
Sponsor:	Senior Director, Human Resources & People Services	Page:	1 of 10
Approved by:	VP, People Services and Organizational Development Executive Leadership Team	Approval Date:	July 24, 2020
		Effective Date:	Sept. 14, 2020
Applies To:	All Team Members		

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## PREAMBLE

Needlestick and other sharps-related injuries may cause serious cuts as well as expose workers to Bloodborne Pathogens. According to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, Needlestick injuries can have serious consequences through the transmission of infectious diseases. The risk of infection after exposure varies by Bloodborne Pathogens.

Nova Scotia Health is committed to providing a healthy and safe Workplace for all by working to eliminate Needlestick and sharps-related injuries. The purpose of this policy is to ensure the safety of all Nova Scotia Health Team Members in the handling of Sharps and Sharps-related waste.

## DEFINITIONS

Bloodborne Pathogens	Infectious microorganisms in human blood that can cause disease in humans. These pathogens include, but are not limited to, hepatitis B (HBV), hepatitis C (HCV) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). (US Dept of Labour)
Community-Based Team Members	Nova Scotia Health Team Members providing care and services in settings outside of Nova Scotia Health facilities (e.g. home care, community immunization clinics, outreach services, etc.)
Containment Level 2 (CL2) Zones	A laboratory space that meets the physical containment and operational practices required to work with risk group 2 (RG2) pathogens. Risk group 2 pathogens pose a moderate risk to the health of individuals or animals, and a low risk to public health and the animal population. These pathogens are able to cause serious disease in a human or animal but are unlikely to do so. Effective treatment and preventive measures are available and the risk of spread of diseases caused by these pathogens is low. Examples of RG2 human pathogens include E. coli, Salmonella, Measles virus, and Norovirus. These laboratories hold a Pathogen and Toxin License issued by the Public Health Agency of Canada under the <a href="#">Human Pathogens and Toxins Act</a> .
Handle	Load, unload, pack, or unpack dangerous goods in a means of containment for the purposes of, in the course of or following transportation and includes storing them in the course of transportation. (Transportation of Dangerous Goods, 2018)
Incident	An unplanned and unwanted event that causes, or has the potential to cause, harm to a person, damage to property or the environment.

Needlestick Injury	An injury that is the result of a skin puncture from a needle (or any other sharp object) that is potentially contaminated with blood or body fluids.
Nova Scotia Health Team Member	Unless specifically limited by a certain policy, refers to all employees, physicians, learners, volunteers, board members, contractors, contract workers, franchise employees, and those with affiliated appointments and other individuals performing activities within Nova Scotia Health.
Patient	All individuals including clients, residents, and members of the public who receive or have requested health care or services from Nova Scotia Health and its health care providers.
Primary Prevention	Aims to prevent disease or injury before it ever occurs by preventing exposures to hazards that cause disease or injury, altering unhealthy or unsafe behaviours that can lead to disease or injury, and increasing resistance to disease or injury should exposure occur.
Relevant Local Policy	Policies of the former district health authorities that are in effect until superseded by Nova Scotia Health policy
Safety-Engineered Needle/Device	A Safety-Engineered Needle/Device incorporates engineering controls to prevent Needlestick Injuries before, during, or after use through built-in safety features. The term “Safety-Engineered Device” is broad and includes many different types of devices from those that have a protective shield over the needle to those that do not use needles at all. The common feature of effective Safety-Engineered Needles/Devices is that they reduce the risk of Needlestick Injuries for health care workers and are approved as a safety-engineered medical device by Health Canada (as per Safer Needles In Healthcare Workplaces Act, S.N.S. 2006).
Secondary Container	A rigid, leak-proof container used for transport of sharps containers other than Transportable Sharps Containers, as required by <a href="#">CAN/CGSB-43.125-2016</a> . The Secondary Container must be clearly labelled “Bio-Hazardous Waste” and include the biohazard symbol. It is not necessarily a clinical product or obtained through Nova Scotia Health Procurement (e.g. a cooler or impervious plastic container).
Secondary Prevention	Aims to reduce the impact of a disease or injury that has already occurred by detecting and treating disease or injury as soon as possible to halt or slow its progress, encouraging personal strategies to prevent reinjury or recurrence, and implementing

	programs to return people to their original health and function to prevent long-term problems.
Secure	A Secure sharps container is appropriately puncture-, spill-, and tamper-resistant.
Sharps	Includes but is not limited to injection needles, lancets, intravascular needles, catheters, cannulae, suture needles, trocars, scalpel blades, and glass.
Transportable Sharps Container	Sharps containers designed for easy transport when providing mobile services that ensure secure closure between uses when properly closed and meet the requirements for CAN/CSA Z316.6 (refer to OHSW or Procurement).
Workplace	Any place at which any Nova Scotia Health Team Member represents Nova Scotia Health, conducts business, or performs work for Nova Scotia Health, including travel and off-site location work.
Immediate Supervisor/Manager	The individual responsible to supervise and/or manage an Nova Scotia Health Team Member, or Physician, and/or group of Team Members/Physicians, including supervisors, managers, directors, senior directors, executive directors, VPs, and physician leads.

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Nova Scotia Health is committed to implementing and maintaining best practices for Infection Prevention and Control and Occupational Health and Safety to:
  - Protect Nova Scotia Health Team Members and the public from Needlestick, other Sharps-related injuries, and Bloodborne Pathogens
  - Adhere to relevant legislation at all levels
  - Promote health and safety as an organization

## POLICY STATEMENTS

1. Nova Scotia Health adheres to its obligations under the [NS Occupational Health and Safety Act](#).
  - 1.1. The [Nova Scotia Health Occupational Health and Safety Management System \(OHSMS\)](#) describes all of the program elements in place for managing employee health, safety, and wellness.
2. All Nova Scotia Health Team Members must:
  - 2.1. Complete training in the following areas (as applicable to role):

- Clinical use of Sharps,
  - Use of container (including closing the container properly),
  - Assembly and placement of containers, and
  - Transport of Containers (both on site and between sites).
- 2.2. Comply with [Nova Scotia Health IPC-RP-001 Routine Practices and Additional Precautions](#), [Nova Scotia Health IPC-RP-005 Routine Practices](#) and Relevant Local Policy on handling, pre-cleaning, and disposal of contaminated devices/instruments at point of use.
- 2.3. Comply with the [Safer Needles in Healthcare Workplaces Act and Regulations](#).

## Use and Handling

3. Nova Scotia Health facilities have Primary and Secondary Prevention devices and techniques in place (e.g. using Safety-Engineered Devices and wearing appropriate personal protective equipment) to improve the safety of the Workplace by reducing the risk of Needlestick and Sharps-related injuries.
4. When working with Sharps, Nova Scotia Health Team Members must:
- 4.1. Place disposable Sharps in Sharps containers at the point of use,
  - 4.2. Take care when Handling glass and other fragile items (e.g. ampules, vials, etc.),
  - 4.3. Not recap used needles or other Sharps unless using a recapping device e.g. Safety-Engineered Needle,
  - 4.4. Not manually bend or break needles, and
  - 4.5. Remove Sharps from procedure trays prior to transportation to Medical Device Reprocessing or disposal by Environmental Services.
5. All Sharps containers Handled by Nova Scotia Health Team Members must meet the requirements of [National Standard of Canada/Canadian General Standards Board-43.125-2016 \(CAN/CGSB-43.125-2016\)](#). Non-standard means of containment are not accepted for use or Handling.
6. All Sharps containers must be secure to prevent tampering/misuse.
- 6.1. This includes the location used to hold full containers waiting for disposal.
7. All Nova Scotia Health Team Members Handling Sharps containers from Containment Level 2 laboratories must comply with Relevant Local Policy on waste management.

## Transportation

8. Within Nova Scotia Health facilities, Team Members must transport Sharps safely and securely to prevent spills, leakage, and diversion, following all relevant departmental procedures.
9. Nova Scotia Health must ship biomedical waste through a reputable Transportation of Dangerous Goods (TDG) certified vendor.
10. When transporting Sharps in a motor vehicle, Community-Based Team Members must:

10.1. Use only designated Transportable Sharps Containers locked/closed using the manufacturer's instructions prior to transport, or secure the Sharps container in a Secondary Container.

10.2. Store in trunk during transport, if possible, or away from vehicle occupants.

## Disposal

11. Sharps are disposed of in accordance with Relevant Local Policy on waste management. Nova Scotia Health facilities do not accept and/or dispose of Sharps from community members, external businesses, or agencies.

11.1. Any exception requires a documented and signed Service Level Agreement.

## Incident Investigation/Follow-Up

12. Sharps occurrences involving Nova Scotia Health Team Members, including injuries, near misses, and Sharps found in the environment, must be reported as a workplace incident using the appropriate Nova Scotia Health Zone-specific reporting mechanism (Safety Improvement & Management System [SIMS] and/or SAFeline).

13. Sharps occurrences involving patients, including injuries and near misses, must be reported as a patient incident in SIMS.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. All Nova Scotia Health Team Members:

1.1. Follow all applicable routine practices and additional precautions ([NSHA IPC-RP-001 Routine Practices and Additional Precautions](#) and [NSHA IPC-RP-005 Routine Practices](#)).

1.2. Follow safe work practices as defined in the Workplace (e.g. departmental protocol/procedures).

- Remove needles and other single-use Sharps from trays before they are transported to Medical Device Reprocessing for cleaning or Environmental Services for disposal (see: [Nova Scotia Health MDR-DC-015 Handling and Pre-cleaning of Contaminated Medical Devices at Point of Use](#)).

1.3. Report all Needlestick and Sharps-related injuries, including injuries, near misses, and Sharps found in the environment, following the zone specific process (SIMS/SAFeline).

1.4. Follow manufacturer's instructions on the safe assembly, use, and disposal of Sharps and containers.

2. Immediate Supervisors/Managers:

2.1. Ensure all Team Members are properly trained in the safe use, handling, storage, transportation, and disposal of needles and Sharps, as applicable to their work responsibilities.

2.2. Ensure Team Members are trained appropriately for assembly, use, closure, storage, and transport of Sharps-related waste.

- 2.3. Promote safe work practices in the Workplace.
- 2.4. Investigate and follow up on all Needlestick and Sharps-related Incident, as per [Section 14: Incident Investigation and Analysis](#) of the OHSMS.
- 2.5. Provide equipment required to safely dispose of Sharps at point of use.
- 2.6. Confirm procedures are followed to ensure Sharps containers are replaced when three quarters (3/4) full (or when indicated fill line is reached) to prevent Needlestick injuries at the point of disposal.
- 2.7. Submit the [Request for Exemption form](#) to the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee (JOHSC) and Occupational Health, Safety and Wellness (OHSW) prior to the purchase of needles without safety-engineered features, when applicable.
  - Include a copy of the approved Request for Exemption form when ordering needles without safety-engineered features
  - Ensure approved exemption is valid prior to purchasing

**Note:** Approval for purchasing needles without safety-engineered features is valid for two years maximum.

- Ensure, on an ongoing basis, any approved exemptions to safety-engineered devices are current and relevant to best practice.
- 2.8. Inform the JOHSC and OHSW when approved exemptions are no longer required.
3. Facilities Support Services:
    - 3.1. Ensures Nova Scotia Health Sharps containers are secured for shipment.
    - 3.2. Ensures all biomedical waste is shipped by a reputable TDG certified vendor.
  4. OHSW:
    - 4.1. Provides consultative support services to management and Team Members on matters relating to occupational health, safety and wellness.
    - 4.2. Provides statistical reports and monitors trends on key health, safety and wellness indicators including Needlestick and Sharps-related incidents.
    - 4.3. Provides support for investigation of reported Needlestick and Sharps-related incidents as needed.
    - 4.4. Provides support for management of blood/body fluid exposure as described in Relevant Local Policy.
    - 4.5. Consults with Nova Scotia Health Supply Chain and users of Safety-Engineered Devices prior to purchasing new Safety-Engineered Devices.
    - 4.6. Participates in the consultative process with JOHSC for the exemption from use of Safety-Engineered Needles when users request an exemption.
  5. Procurement:
    - 5.1. Consults product users and OHSW representatives prior to purchasing new hollow bore or intravenous needles for product evaluation.

- A new needle is a product that has not been previously approved by Nova Scotia Health.
- 5.2. Ensures an approved and current [Request for Exemption form](#) is included with all purchase requisitions of needles without safety-engineered features.
  - 5.3. Procures only those Sharp disposal containers that meet the [CAN/CGSB-43.125-2016](#) standard as described in the [TDG Regulations](#).
6. JOHSC
- 6.1. Participates in the consultative process for the exemption of Safety-Engineered Devices.
  - 6.2. Informs the individual requesting and OHSW in writing when a request for exemption of a Safety-Engineered Device is approved.
  - 6.3. Participates in review of incident investigations as described in [Section 9: Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committees](#) of the OHSMS.

## REFERENCES

### Legislation

Human Pathogens and Toxins Act, Statutes of Canada (2009, c. 24). Retrieved from the Justice Laws website: <https://lois-laws.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/H-5.67/FullText.html>

Safer Needles in Healthcare Workplaces Act, S.N.S. 2006, c 7. Retrieved from <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/safer%20needles%20in%20healthcare%20workplaces.pdf>

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Occupational Health and Safety Act, S.N.S 1996, c. 7. Retrieved from the Nova Scotia Legislature website <https://nslegislature.ca/sites/default/files/legc/statutes/occupational%20health%20and%20safety.pdf>

### Other

Canadian General Standards Board. (2021). *Packaging of Category A and Category B infectious substances (Class 6, Division 6.2) and clinical, (bio) medical or regulated medical waste*. Retrieved from [https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection\\_2021/ongc-cgsb/P29-043-125-2021-eng.pdf](https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2021/ongc-cgsb/P29-043-125-2021-eng.pdf)

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## RELATED DOCUMENTS

### Forms

[Request for Exemption](#)

### Policies

Blood/Body Fluid Exposure – refer to Relevant Local Policy

[IPC-RP-001 Routine Practices and Additional Precautions](#)

[IPC-RP-005 Routine Practices](#)

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[MDR-DC-015 Handling and Pre-Cleaning of Contaminated Medical Devices at Point of Use](#)

Waste Management – refer to Relevant Local Policy\* \* \*

### District Health Authority Policies Being Replaced

CH 80-060 Sharps Disposal

CDHA CH 20-060 Sharps Disposal

CBDHA OHS-30-90 Safer Needle Devices

CHA 109-011 Safety Engineered Sharps Device

South West Health 1315.0 Sharps Use and Disposal

South Shore District Health Authority OH-250-005 Sharps

### Version History

Major Revisions (e.g. Standard 4 year review)	Minor Revisions (e.g. spelling correction, wording changes, etc.)
2020-07-24	