

SN (NI) 2001/28

DATE: 9 July 2001

**For Attention and Action by:
Chief Executive of each HSS Trust
General Manager/Chief Executive of each HSS Board
Chief Executive of each Agency**



**HEALTH ESTATES
ESTATE POLICY**

**NORTHERN
IRELAND
ADVERSE
INCIDENT
CENTRE**

TITLE:

Safe use and disposal of sharps

MANUFACTURER/SUPPLIER

Various

PROBLEM

Health care professionals, other health service staff and patients continue to receive sharps injuries due to the inappropriate use and disposal of sharps.

DISTRIBUTION

This notice should be brought to the attention of all who need to know or be aware of it, including those listed below, in accordance with local procedures. This will include:

- Liaison Officers
- Risk Managers
- Health & Safety Officers/Advisors
- Device Managers
- Estates Managers
- Medical Directors
- Nursing Directors
- Medical, Nursing and Care Staff in all Wards and Departments
- Practice Nurses
- Hospices
- Infection Control Nurses
- General Medical Practitioners
- General Dental Practitioners
- Community Care Staff, including District Nursing

Boards/Trusts should ensure that if appropriate, this information is passed to all persons having the responsibility for the premises registered under "THE REGISTERED HOMES (NI) ORDER 1992.

SAFETY

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ACTION

- All sharps should be disposed of safely after use in accordance with current guidance (see Background).
- All those preparing local policies on the safe handling and disposal of sharps should carry out risk assessments in accordance with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000.
- The policy should form part of the written health and safety policy as required under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992, Amended 1994 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978.
- All sharps injuries should be reported in accordance with the requirements of the NHS Controls Assurance Standards (Infection Control Standard, Criterion 6) and local procedures.

BACKGROUND

1. NIAIC continues to receive reports of sharps injuries that have occurred as a result of the inappropriate use of sharps and the way in which they have been disposed of.
2. In this context “sharps” include needles, scalpels, other cutting instruments, bone fragments, etc.
3. Guidance has been issued on the safe handling and disposal of sharps:
 - *Training Guide for the Management of Clinical Waste.* PEL(99)18 issued 29 March 1999.
 - *Evidence-based guidelines for the prevention of hospital associated infection.* Journal of Hospital Infection (2001), 47 (Supplement): S5-S9 (also available at www.doh.gov.uk/HAI.)
 - HSC 1998/063 *Guidance for clinical healthcare workers: Protection against blood-borne viruses. Recommendations of the Expert Advisory Group on AIDS and the Advisory Group on Hepatitis.* UK Health Departments (also available at www.open.gov.uk/doh/chcguide1.htm).
 - *Protection against blood-borne infections in the workplace: HIV and Hepatitis, Advisory Committee on Dangerous Pathogens (1995).*
 - “*Safe disposal of clinical waste*”, Health Services Advisory Committee (1999) IDBN 0-7176-2492-7.
 - “*A Code of Practice for the Safe Use and Disposal of Sharps*” British Medical Association (1990).
4. The sharps containers should comply with BS 7320:1990 “*Specification for sharps containers*”, and/or conform to the standards contained in the Carriage of Dangerous Goods Regulations. The majority of sharps waste is transported under UN 3291. Packagings for such waste need to be type-approved in accordance with *Carriage of Dangerous Goods (Classification Packaging and Labelling)* and *Use of Transportable Pressure Receptacles Regulations (NI) 1997.* (CDGCPL2) and meet the *Approved Requirements* for the packaging of sharps contaminated with unspecified infectious substances. Appendix 1 to this Safety Notice provides suggested “best practice” on the safe use and disposal of sharps.
5. General enquiries relating to the disposal of clinical waste should be directed to Mr W Murdock, Health Estates.



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ENQUIRIES

Enquires to NIAIC should quote the reference number SN(NI) 2001/28 and be addressed to:

Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC)
Health Estates
Estate Policy
Stoney Road
Dundonald
Belfast BT16 1US

Marked for the attention of Mr Brian Godfrey

Tel: 02890 523714
Fax: 02890 523900
Email: brian.godfrey@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Brian Godfrey
NIAIC Manager

HOW TO REPORT ADVERSE INCIDENTS

Adverse Incidents relating to medical devices, non-medical equipment, plant and buildings should be reported to NIAIC as soon as possible. Advice on how to report is given in Safety Notice SN (NI) 2001/01. If you are in doubt about how to report incidents, please speak to your liaison officer or contact NIAIC using the telephone number provided.

*Heath Estates is an Executive Agency of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety
Áisíneacht Feidhmeannach don Roinn Sláinte. Serbhísí Sóisialta agus Sábháilteacht Phoiblí*