



# County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH  
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DIVISION

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## Medical Waste Container Labeling for Health Care Facilities

*Medical waste* is governed by the California Medical Waste Management Act (MWMA) and San Diego County Ordinance. The medical waste container labeling, San Diego County Ordinance SEC. 68.1205, was enacted in 1989 as a response to medical wastes that were washed ashore on area beaches and were found dumped in County landfills. Medical waste must be accumulated, stored and transferred in containers that meet the requirements specified in the MWMA. Primary containers accumulating medical wastes, with the exception of bench top red bags used to collect non-breakable pipette tips, must be labeled with generator's name, address and phone number per the San Diego County Code.

### ***Why does San Diego County require that medical waste containers be labeled with the generator's name, address and phone number?***

Periodically, medical waste goes to the landfill or is found in trash dumpsters, alleys or other inappropriate locations. The generator information provided on the container labels allows HMD to return the waste to the generator and take appropriate enforcement action when necessary.

### ***What waste from a medical practice must be managed as medical waste?***

Medical waste" means any biohazardous, pathology, pharmaceutical, or trace chemotherapy waste not regulated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-580), as amended;  
sharps and trace chemotherapy wastes generated in a health care . in the diagnosis, treatment, immunization, or care of humans or animals; . . .  
(HSC§117690)

### ***What medical waste containers require a generator label?***

All *primary* containers accumulating medical wastes (e.g. including but not limited to sharps containers, red bags, chemotherapeutic, pharmaceutical and pathology waste containers) are to be labeled with the generator labels.

### ***Are bench top red bags exempt from container labeling?***

Yes. Small bench top red bags used to collect non-breakable pipette tips that are later consolidated into a larger, labeled red bag are not required to have a generator label.

### ***Can large health Care Systems label their medical waste containers with a central facility address/emergency phone number to reduce their printing costs?***

Yes. The medical waste generator may choose to use a site specific address/phone number or one that can be traced back to the health care system and the responsible party. Acceptable labels could include an electronic tracking system (e.g. bar code or

unique number). In cases, where medical waste containers are discovered at a wrong location, it will be the responsibility of the health care system personnel to identify the origin of the medical waste container.

***Can labels be affixed on medical waste containers?***

Yes. Address labels may be affixed or printed on the medical waste containers.

**Sample Generator's Label**

*(Must include this information)*

**Name:** L.N. Sharp, DDS  
**Address:** 123 Needle Stick Drive  
San Diego, CA 92111  
**Phone #:** (619) 123-4567