



County of San Diego

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

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MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL FOR VETERINARY PRACTICES

Medical waste is regulated under the California Health and Safety Code Sections 117600 - 118360, also known as the Medical Waste Management Act (MWMA), and the San Diego County Code. Medical waste generated from a veterinary practice includes, but is not limited to, used needles (sharps) and other wastes from an animal that is suspected by the attending veterinarian as being infected with a pathogen that is also infectious to humans. Veterinary practices may also generate hazardous waste.

What is medical waste? Any biohazardous, pathology, pharmaceutical, or trace chemotherapy waste not regulated by the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (Public Law 94-580). For veterinary practices this includes waste generated as a result of the diagnosis, treatment, immunization, or care of animals or waste generated in research using animal pathogens.

Health and Safety Code, Section 117690(a)

What is medical solid waste? San Diego County Code defines medical solid waste as solid waste of obvious medical origin. It is not medical waste as defined in the Medical Waste Management Act, but could be perceived to be so by the general public. Some examples of medical solid waste include empty specimen containers, bandages, medical dressings containing non-liquid blood, surgical gloves, treated medical waste, biohazardous wastes that are not medical wastes, non-hazardous pharmaceutical wastes, and other materials which are not regulated as medical waste. *SDCC, Ch 12, Section 68.1207*

What are sharps? Sharps are devices with acute rigid corners, edges, or protuberances capable of cutting or piercing, including, but not limited to, hypodermic needles with syringes, blades, needles with attached tubing, acupuncture needles, broken glass items used in health care such as Pasteur pipettes and blood vials contaminated with biohazardous waste, generated in a health care setting in the diagnosis, treatment, immunization, or care of animals. *Health and Safety Code Section 117690(b)(4)*

What is biohazardous waste? Wastes such as animal parts, tissues, liquid blood, fluids, carcasses, vaccines or cultures, the attending veterinarian suspects is contaminated with infectious agents known to be contagious to humans. *Health and Safety Code Section 117690(b)(1)*

How should a veterinarian practice dispose of regulated medical waste?

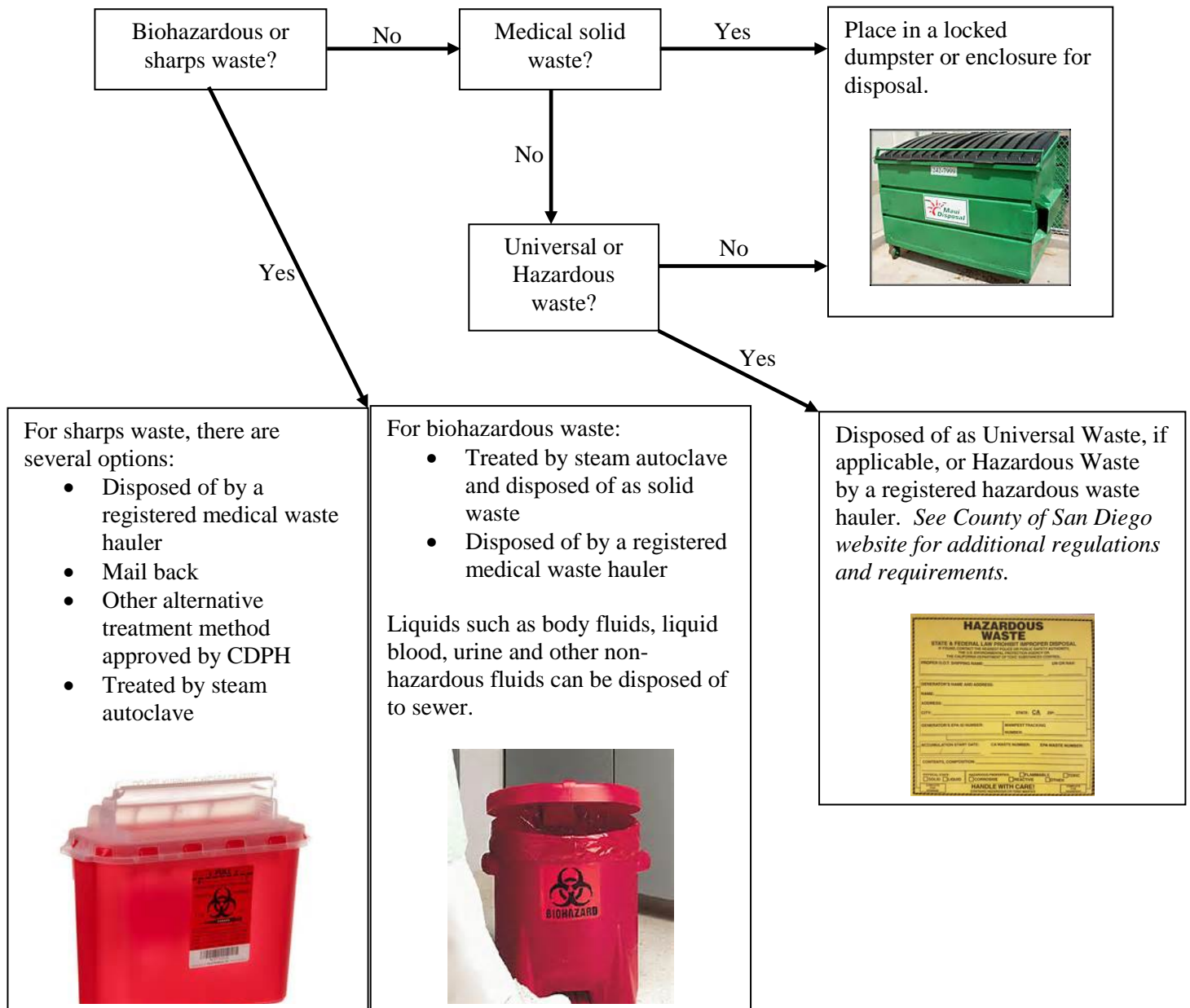
There are several options for disposal of *medical waste*:

- Disposal through a registered *medical waste* hauler:
[California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\) list of approved haulers](#)
- Mail-in sharps disposal (sharps waste only),
- Use of an alternative treatment technology approved by [CDPH](#), such as encapsulation, which is used for *sharps waste*,
- Treatment onsite by a steam autoclave prior to disposal as medical solid waste.

MEDICAL WASTE DISPOSAL GUIDE

*This diagram is intended as a disposal guide for some types of regulated waste.
It is not intended to serve as a comprehensive list of all regulated wastes.*

For more information on storage, accumulation times and labeling, see guidance document [Management of Regulated Wastes Generated by Dental, Veterinary and Medical Practices](#) on the County of San Diego website and the Medical Waste Management Act.



For additional information about medical and hazardous waste contact the Hazardous Materials Duty Desk at (858) 505-6880 or visit HMD's website at <http://www.sdcdeh.org>.

For ways to reduce waste through pollution prevention, please contact HMD's Pollution Prevention Specialist at (858) 505-6881.