

Information sheet

Waste management

Determining whether waste is “clinical waste”

This information sheet will help determine whether the clinical waste that is generated could be exempt from some requirements of the clinical waste management provisions in the Environmental Protection (Waste Management) Regulation 2000 (the Regulation). The Regulation does not define clinical waste generators. It only specifies certain premises that must develop clinical or related waste management plans.

What is clinical waste?

Clinical waste means waste that has the potential to cause disease, including for example the following:

- animal waste;
- discarded sharps;
- human tissue waste; and
- laboratory waste.

When waste is not clinical waste

- **Domestic premises.** In the home environment the only category of clinical and related wastes requiring special treatment is sharps or other devices used to penetrate the skin. All other wastes can be disposed of through the domestic waste stream (National Health and Medical Research Council – *National Guidelines for Waste Management in the Health Care Industry*, March 1999).
- **Emergency first-aid.** Waste generated when administering emergency first-aid at accident scenes should be disposed of by using all reasonable precautions commensurate with the nature and circumstances of the situation.
- **Tattooists.** If the waste does not contain free-flowing blood or body fluids, it is not clinical waste. This means that waste with a small amount of dried blood (e.g. cotton wool ball with a spot of dried blood) does not have to be disposed of as clinical waste. However, any sharps must be contained within a rigid-walled, puncture resistant container prior to disposal. The container must then be given to an approved regulated waste treatment facility via a registered transporter.
- **Electrolysis.** Electrolysis procedures used by beauticians to treat or remove body hair are not considered to generate clinical waste if the waste does not contain free-flowing blood or body fluids. Any sharps must be contained within a rigid-walled, puncture-resistant container prior to disposal. The container must then be given to an approved treatment facility via a registered transporter.
- **Ear piercing/body piercing.** This practice is not considered to generate clinical waste, unless the waste contains free-flowing blood or body fluids. However, any sharps waste must be disposed of in the same manner as for tattooists, or go to an approved treatment facility via a registered transporter.
- **Waxing.** Waxing procedures used by beauticians for removing body hair are not considered to generate clinical waste.

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- **Public areas** (e.g. shopping centres, parks, beaches, hotels, restaurants, railway and bus stations, airports etc.). Sanitary hygiene waste and sharps are not considered to be clinical waste if disposed of or discarded in a public toilet or public area.
- **Animal bathing and grooming.** Animal bathing and grooming services (e.g. hydrobathing and hair and nail clipping) are not considered to generate clinical waste, even if the activity is conducted at a premises generating clinical waste (such as a veterinary clinic). However, correct management practices need to be followed. Particularly to manage waste water and any associated chemicals that may have been used.
- **Facilities having animals** (e.g. pet shops, kennels, pounds, theme parks). Waste generated from a pet shop, public aviary, aquarium or zoo is not considered to be clinical waste, unless the waste originated from an animal contaminated with an agent infectious to humans. This waste must then be managed as clinical waste.
- **Crime scenes.** Waste from the clean-up of a crime scene generally does not need to be managed as clinical waste, unless the material is heavily contaminated with free-flowing blood or body fluids, or is known to contain infectious agents.
- **First aid rooms.** (e.g. in schools, offices, factories) Clinical waste generated in the treatment of minor injuries (e.g. bandages, bandaids, cotton wool) is not clinical waste. However, any hypodermic needles must be placed in a rigid-walled, puncture resistant container, which can then be disposed in the general waste stream if allowed by the local government.
- **Medical practitioners, dentists and vets.** General waste such as tongue depressors, cotton wool balls, tissues, bandages, bandaids, protective bibs, gloves, overalls, disposable sheets, and shoe protectors with no free flowing blood, are not classed as clinical waste and can go into the general waste stream.
- **Laboratories.** Waste from laboratories that do not conduct testing of blood, body fluids or tissue from humans or animals is not clinical waste.

Further information

Other information sheets in this series include:

- Clinical or related waste management
- Storage and transport of clinical or related waste
- Clinical or related waste treatment and disposal
- Defining clinical waste
- Managing sanitary hygiene waste
- Pharmaceutical and cytotoxic waste management
- Waste management laws

If you generate, transport or treat clinical waste you may be required to obtain a development approval¹ and become a registered operator with the relevant administering authority. Please refer to the Department of

¹ Development approvals are legally binding agreements (under the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009*) that outline the holder's commitment to protect the environment and DERM's approval of activities operating in an acceptable environmental manner.

Environment and Resource Management (DERM) information sheet *Requirement to become a registered operator*.

For copies of DERM supporting information, visit the website at www.derm.qld.gov.au.

Advice and support are available by contacting Permit and Licence Management within DERM on 1300 130 372 or through a statewide network of regional DERM offices. Contact details are listed in the information sheet *Contact details for environmental licensing - including Council area* available on the DERM website and in the White Pages.

Disclaimer:

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