



**HEALTH & SAFETY**  
**IECHYD A DIOGELWCH**

**Sharps in Laboratories, Healthcare and Allied Practices  
Policy Arrangements**

**HSA-10132**

## Contents

Contents.....	2
Document Control .....	3
Amendment Record .....	3
1. Introduction.....	4
2. Responsibilities.....	5
2.1 Head of College/ PSU .....	5
2.2 Line Managers and Supervisors .....	5
2.3 Staff and Students .....	5
2.4 Occupational Health.....	5
2.5 Corporate Responsibility .....	6
3. Safe Use of Sharps .....	7
4. Sharps boxes.....	8
5. Action following a sharps injury .....	8
6. Training and Information .....	8
7. Audit .....	9
8. Further Information .....	9

## Document Control

Document Name	Sharps in Laboratories, Healthcare and Allied Practices Policy Arrangements
Document Ref. Number	HSA-10132
Revision	1.0
Date of Issue	July 2018
Written By	Wendy Clark (Sport Sciences, College of Engineering) and Craig Toutt (Wellbeing academy, College of Human Health)
Amended by	Gretta Roberts (Health & Safety, Corporate Responsibility)
Reviewed by	Biological Hazards & GMO Sub-Committee
Contact Email	healthandsafety@swansea.ac.uk

## Amendment Record

Revision	Date	Amendment(s)
0		Draft
1	July 2018	New Policy Arrangement
2		
3		
4		
5		

## 1. Introduction

The Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 implement aspects of the European Council Directive 2010/32/EU, designed to prevent healthcare workers from injuries and infections due to the use of sharps.

As a University offering a range of qualifications for health care and allied services professionals, undertaking studies and clinical trials involving human participation and providing Wellbeing services, Swansea University is committed to upholding the spirit of these regulations in all activities involving sharps in our laboratories and health-care related facilities.

The definition of 'Sharps' relates to needles, syringes, edged instruments, broken glassware, trocars, phials, scalpels, scalpel blades, razors, scissors, lancets, bone fragments or any other item which may cause laceration or puncture wounds and are contaminated in use by blood, body fluids or other harmful biological hazards or chemicals.

Sharps instruments in the health care setting represent a specific risk due to the possibility of contamination with blood or other biological material where there is the potential of transmitting infectious agents such as hepatitis B or Human immunodeficiency viruses. Similarly within laboratories sharps can be a way of introducing hazardous microorganisms, cell lines or chemicals into the body.

Support staff who may enter teaching and research areas, such as cleaners, porters, maintenance staff, or waste operatives may also be exposed to injuries from sharps which have been disposed of in-correctly by the primary user.

This policy is intended to provide guidance on the safe use of sharps, it should be read in combination with other relevant H&S policy arrangements including policy arrangements on phlebotomy, immunisation and biological hazards, and the risk assessment for that particular activity.

## 2. Responsibilities

### 2.1 Head of College/ PSU

In order to manage the risks from sharps in their areas, Heads of College/ Directors of PSUs must ensure:

- There are systems in place for the risk assessment of activities using sharps.
- There are written procedures for the selection, use and disposal of sharps.
- Users have received appropriate training.
- A self-inspection programme covering the use and storage of cryogenic materials is implemented.

### 2.2 Line Managers and Supervisors

Line Managers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that all staff and students under their control implement the principles outlined in this policy, this includes ensuring:

- Unnecessary use of sharps is avoided and where possible needle-free equipment or safer sharps are available and used.
- Consideration is given to the use of needle stick prevention devices, where they will improve the safe working of staff and students.
- Risk assessments are conducted to ensure that any risks regarding the use of sharps devices are reduced or removed, and emergency procedures are clearly defined.
- Staff and students have received appropriate training and information for the use of sharps.
- Appropriate sharps devices and disposal systems are available at all times.
- They are aware of what action is required should any staff member or student sustain a sharps injury.
- Staff and students obtain appropriate medical assistance, including reporting to A&E in the event of an injury, and subsequent reporting to Occupational Health for follow up.
- Any incidents involving sharps are reported and investigated in line with the Universities adverse event reporting procedure.
- They will liaise with the Health & Safety and Sustainability teams if they have any concerns regarding sharps devices or their safe disposal.

### 2.3 Staff and Students

All staff and students who undertake activities involving sharps should:

- Take personal responsibility for the safe use and disposal of any sharp device and not to misuse.
- Participate in any training identified as necessary to promote safe use and disposal.
- Be aware of or know how to access information on action required following a sharps injury.
- Raise any concerns regarding the safe use of sharps to their line manager/ academic supervisor.
- Report incidents relating to sharps injuries.

### 2.4 Occupational Health

The Occupational Health Service is responsible for provide advice and guidance to staff and students following a sharps injury within the University, or liaising with Occupational Health Services at other institutions in the event of a sharps injury occurring during a placement.

## 2.5 Corporate Responsibility

The Health & Safety and Sustainability teams are responsible for:

- Providing advice and guidance to staff and students around the safe use of sharps.
- Supporting the development and implementation of this policy and the promotion of the safe use and disposal of sharps.
- Support Colleges/PSUS to audit and evaluate compliance with and effectiveness of this.
- Arrange the disposal of sharp waste in line with the University Waste policy.

### 3. Safe Use of Sharps

Best practice for the safe handling and disposal of sharps includes the following advice:

- Avoid sharps usage wherever possible – consider the use of alternative devices or procedures, needle-free devices or safer use sharps with inbuilt protection devices.



*Bevelled needle guard for safer unseathing/reseathing*



*Safety lancet with retracting needle*

- If using scalpels – consider the use of disposable units or use of scalpel blade removal devices.



*Disposable scalpel blade and handle*



*Safe scalpel blade removal device*

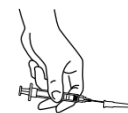
- Sharps must not be passed directly from person to person. Handling must be kept to a minimum.
- Never leave sharps lying around.
- Used needles must not be re-sheathed unless there is a safe method available for doing so.



*Needles must not be re-sheathed by hand*



*Re-capping device*



*One handed scooping method*

- Ensure a sharps waste container is available close at the point of use to avoid carrying exposed sharps. Always dispose of sharps as soon as possible after use.



*Syringes, cartridges and needles should be disposed of intact as a single unit whenever possible.*



*Some sharps containers will have an inbuilt needle removal device which should be considered where required.*

- Never put hands into sharps containers. e.g. to retrieve an incorrectly disposed of item or to press sharps down to make more room.
- Close the aperture to the sharps container when carrying or if left unsupervised, to prevent spillage or tampering.
- Never carry sharps in the hand or in the pocket – if there is a need to transport sharps they should be placed in a rigid container or tray.
- If a sharp has been accidentally dropped, it must be retrieved and disposed of properly. If unable to retrieve the dropped sharp warn others so that care may be taken.

## 4. Sharps boxes

Sharps containers must conform to BS 7320 and placed in a safe location to prevent injury to staff, patients or other visitors and out of the reach of any children accessing the facilities.

They should be securely assembled and label completed with the following information:

- University and College
- Name of person assembling the unit
- Date assembled
- Date locked
- Name of local person arranging disposal

Sharps containers must be assembled correctly prior to use, and should not be filled above the manufacturers' marked line.

Sharps containers must be closed securely when the marked line has been reached and disposed of in accordance with the University waste policies.

## 5. Action following a sharps injury

In the event of skin being pierced or punctured by a used needle or other sharp, the injured person should:

- Encourage the wound to bleed by squeezing and holding it under running water.
- Wash thoroughly with warm soapy water.
- The wound should not be sucked, and should not be scrubbed while it is being washed,
- Cover the area with a waterproof dressing.
- If splashed with bodily fluids to the eyes or mouth, the area should be rinsed with plenty of running water.
- Seek urgent medical advice:
  - If on a clinical placement this may be the local A&E department or Occupational Health department, in line with the placement providers' arrangements.
- If at the University, staff/students should attend the nearest accident and emergency department:
  - Singleton Urgent Care Unit, Swansea SA2 8QA (limited opening times)
  - Neath Port Talbot Minor Injury Unit, Neath, SA12 7BX (limited opening times)
  - Morriston Hospital A&E, Swansea SA6 6NL
  - Glangwili General Hospital H&S, Carmarthen, SA31 2AF
- Inform their manager as soon as possible and ensure it is reported as an adverse event via the Report It online system.
- The line manager/academic supervisor should refer the injured party to the University Occupational Health Department for a follow-up assessment and if required, appropriate vaccinations may be recommended/organised.
- The line manager should consider whether staff or student counselling would be appropriate

## 6. Training and Information

All staff and students who handle sharps must receive appropriate information and training, which should include:

- The risks from injuries involving sharps and the hazardous materials used.
- Good practice in safe use, disposal and preventing injury.
- Action to be taken in the event of a sharps injury and support available.



- Relevant legal duties.

Information and training may be provided in many forms, including on the job training, safe operating systems, safety guides, posters and information on internal staff websites.

In addition, staff working in an environment that may come into contact with sharps through inappropriate disposal e.g. domestic, portering, grounds and security staff should receive training on the correct action to take on discovery and emergency action.

## 7. Audit

Colleges and PSUs should undertake periodic audits of sharps practices including review of equipment available, awareness of procedures and training in line with University audit procedures.

## 8. Further Information

- Health and Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare) Regulations 2013 Guidance for employers and employees HSE information sheet. Health Services Information Sheet 7. Health and Safety Executive 2013 [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis7.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/hsis7.pdf)
- [www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/blood-borne-viruses/avoiding-sharps-injuries](http://www.hse.gov.uk/biosafety/blood-borne-viruses/avoiding-sharps-injuries)