

COMS Policy on Use of Sharps

I. Purpose

To establish a policy on the safe use of sharps.

II. Applicability

This policy applies to all institutions that use sharps and use the Committee on Microbiological Safety (COMS) as their IBC of record.

III. Definitions

Sharps: Discarded medical and research items that may cause puncture or cuts, including, but not limited to, all needles, syringes, lancets, pen needles, glass pasteur pipettes, broken glassware, glass slides, cover slips, scalpels and razor blades, suture needles, dental wires, and disposable razors used in connection with a medical or research procedure.

IV. Implementation Procedures for Safe Sharps Use

A. General Information

B. Procedure

1. Eliminate the use of devices sharp enough to puncture your skin (including glass) whenever possible
2. Use a sharp with an engineered safety feature when such a device is available and feasible for your procedure.
3. Get trained in proper techniques before using sharp devices in conjunction with biohazardous materials.
4. Use scalpels in the appropriate and safe manner.
5. Do not leave sharp devices out in the environment any longer than necessary.
6. Eliminate recapping needles.
7. Do not put excessive force on a sharps device
8. Use an appropriate sharps container for disposal of sharps waste.
9. Do not fill sharps containers more than 2/3
10. Wear appropriate PPE in accordance with institutional policy

C. Storage:

Sharps must be safely stored in the laboratory when not in use. Sharps that are used must be stored for Biowaste Sharps disposal in a rigid sharps container. If a sharp must be re-used, it should be placed in a rigid container with a lid.

V. Policy Authority

The Office of Biological Safety of the Harvard Medical School is responsible for supporting the Committee on Microbiological Safety. This includes preparation and revising of the COMS Policy Manual for committee review and approval.

The Committee on Microbiological Safety (COMS) authorizes this policy.

VI. Related Policies

- Suitable Methods of Liquid Biowaste Decontamination and Disposal
- Suitable Methods for Solid Biowaste Decontamination and Disposal

VII. References

- [105 CMR 480.000 Minimum Requirements for the Management of Medical or Biological Waste \(State Sanitary Code Chapter VIII\), effective July 11, 2008.](#)