Organisation name Site or unit		STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE Sharps and Clinical Waste Management	
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Owner	Clinical lead for this procedure	**Approved by**	
Classification	Internal	**Applies to**	All clinical areas
Signature			

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
SOP	Standard operating procedure
WHO	World Health Organization

Abbreviation	Meaning
WST-FRM-001	Waste collection record (form)

Key points

- Put sharps straight into a sharps container at the point of use. Never recap, bend or break needles.
- Close a sharps container when it is two-thirds full, label it with the date and your initials, and move it to the waste store.
- Segregate each waste item into the category and colour set by the hospital at the point of use.
- If you are injured by a sharp: wash the wound, report at once, and follow the occupational health procedure.
- Stop and get help straight away if a container cannot be closed, a collection is missed, or a spill is larger than the spill kit can manage.

1. Purpose

To protect staff, patients and the public from injury and infection from sharps and clinical waste, and to make sure waste is collected, stored and disposed of lawfully. Sharps injuries and the mishandling of waste are preventable harms: each one follows from a step done at the wrong time, in the wrong container, or in the wrong place. This SOP sets out the steps and the reasons for them. It supports criterion 2B.5.

2. Scope

Element	Coverage
Who	All staff who generate, handle, store or move waste at the facility.
Where	All clinical areas, laboratories, theatres, dental areas, the waste store and the collection point.
When	At the point of use; during storage; at each collection; and during any spill.
Not covered	Radioactive waste and pressurised gas cylinders, which have their own procedures.

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Sharps	Any object that can cut or puncture the skin: needles, scalpels, lancets, glass ampoules, and broken glass contaminated with body fluid.
Clinical waste	Waste that is infectious, anatomical, pharmaceutical or otherwise hazardous, classified by the hospital and the national rules.
Segregation	Separating each item into its category at the point of use, so that it goes into the right container.
Waste manifest	The record, signed by the collector and the hospital, for each collection.
Spill kit	The equipment on each unit for cleaning up body fluid and broken glass: gloves, absorbent material, a sharps-safe scoop, and a bag.

4. Background

The World Health Organization’s handbook *Safe management of wastes from health-care activities* (2nd edition, 2014) gives guidance on the safe handling and disposal of health-care waste in normal situations and emergencies,

including the hazards of contaminated needles [1]. This SOP applies that guidance together with the hospital's colour and category rules, which must match the national rules for clinical waste.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Clinical director	Approves this SOP and receives the quarterly waste audit.
Facilities or waste manager	Arranges collections, maintains the waste store, and keeps the manifests.
Unit manager	Ensures containers and bins are stocked, in date and labelled, and that the spill kit is complete.
All staff	Dispose of sharps and waste at the point of use, in the correct container, and report any injury at once.
Occupational health	Manages the response to any sharps injury.

6. Materials and equipment

Item	Requirement
Sharps containers	Puncture-resistant, with a fill line, a closing lid, and a label area. Placed at the point of use, at arm's reach.
Clinical waste bins	Colour-coded by category, as set by the hospital, with the category printed on the lid.
Spill kit	On each unit and in the waste store, checked each shift and restocked after use.
Collection record WST-FRM-001	The current form for each collection.

7. Safety and exceptions

- **Never reach into a sharps container** and never force a full container closed.
- **Broken glass** contaminated with body fluid is handled as a sharp, using tongs or a brush and pan with a sharps-safe scoop. It is never picked up by hand.
- **Single-use only.** A sharp is used once, then discarded. Do not pass a used sharp to another person, and do not leave one unattended on a trolley.
- **Injury.** Wash the wound with soap and running water (do not scrub or squeeze it), report at once to the clinician in charge, and attend occupational health the same day.

8. Procedure

Before you start

- Check that a sharps container of the right size is at the point of use, and that the bins are labelled with their categories.
- Check that the spill kit is complete and in date.

Step 1. Dispose of sharps at the point of use

1. Dispose of the sharp immediately after use, into the sharps container at arm's reach. Do not put it down on the bed, the trolley or the floor first.

2. Do not recap the needle. Do not bend or break it. Use a safety device where the facility has provided one, and activate it as the manufacturer directs.
3. Do not overfill the container. When it reaches the two-thirds line, close it.

Step 2. Segregate other waste

1. Decide the category of each waste item before you put it in a bin. Use the category set by the hospital for infectious, pathological, pharmaceutical, cytotoxic and general waste, which must match the national rules [1].
2. Put each item in the bin for its category and colour. Do not place a different category in the same bin.
3. Close and replace each bin at the fill point set by the unit's waste plan, and at the end of the shift.

Step 3. Label and store

1. Label each closed sharps container with the date, your initials, and the unit.
2. Take closed containers to the waste store. Keep the store locked, labelled, clean and dry.
3. Do not store waste in a corridor, an exit, or a clean utility room.

Step 4. Collect and record

1. At each collection, complete WST-FRM-001 with the date, the number and type of containers, and the unit.
2. Obtain the collector's signature on the waste manifest. Keep a copy in the waste store file.

Step 5. Respond to a spill

1. Clear the area and keep others away. Put on gloves and apron.
2. Cover body fluid with absorbent material. Pick up broken glass with the sharps-safe scoop, never by hand.
3. Place all material in the correct container, and clean the area with the approved disinfectant. Record the spill and report it to the unit manager.

9. Worked examples

Situation	What to do
A nurse has drawn up a dose and the needle is still on the syringe, and the container is across the room.	Do not carry an uncapped needle across the room. Ask a colleague to bring a container to you, or go to the nearest one, and dispose of the sharp directly into it without recapping. Report to the unit manager that no container is at the point of use.
A sharps container reads "two-thirds full" when a new patient needs a cannula.	Close the container now, label it, and take it to the store. Replace it with an empty container at the point of use before the procedure.
A health-care worker is cut by a used scalpel blade during cleaning.	Wash the wound with soap and running water, do not squeeze it, report to the clinician in charge at once, and attend occupational health the same day. Record the injury.
The waste collection is missed, and the store is full.	Keep the store locked, do not leave containers in corridors, and escalate to the facilities manager the same shift. Record the missed collection and the actions taken.



Figure 1. Sharps container fill levels

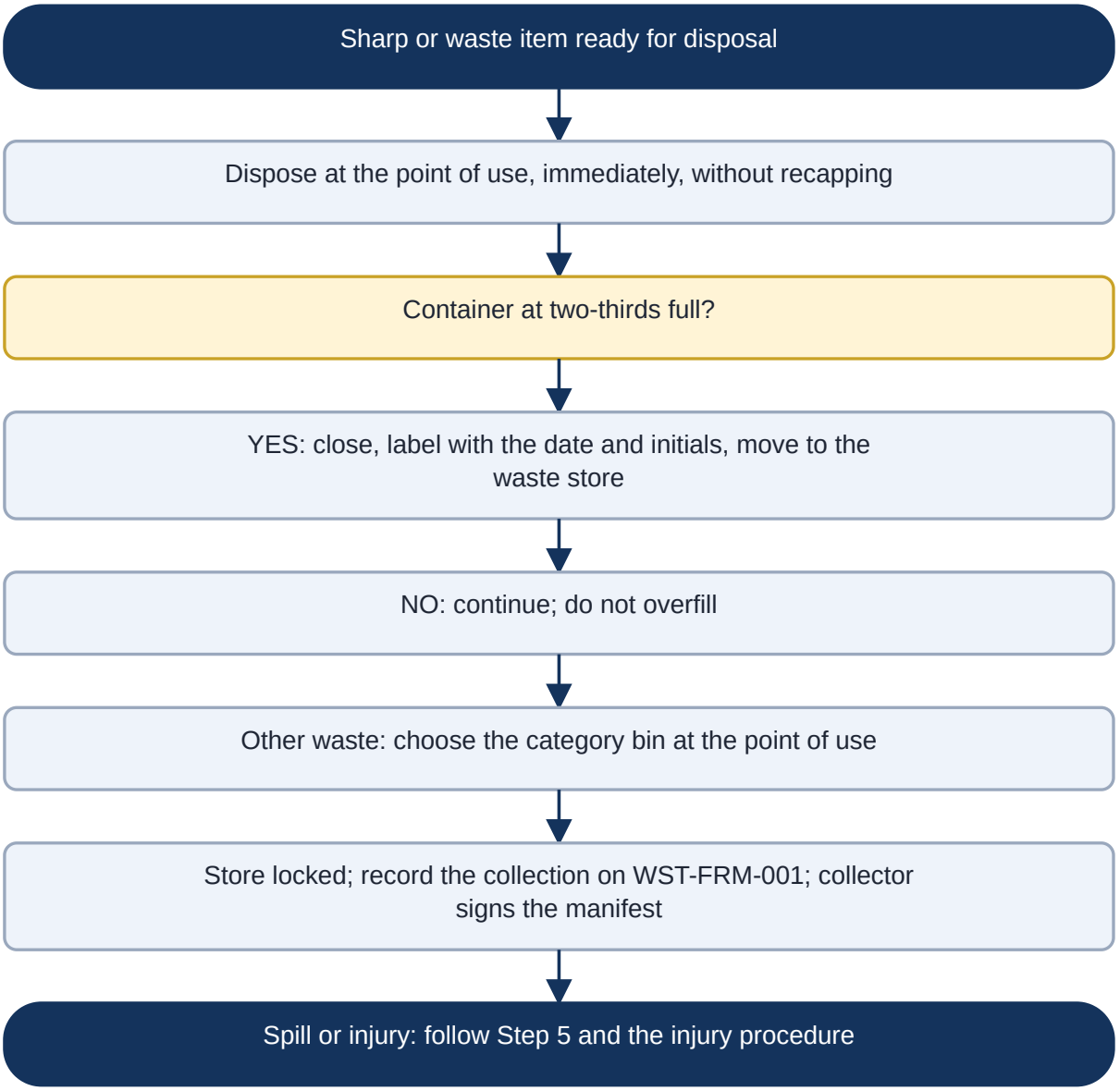


Figure 2. From point of use to collection

10. Decision points

If	Then
Container two-thirds full	Close, label, and move to the store.
Container cannot be closed	Stop using it; do not force it; call the facilities manager for a replacement.
Collection missed	Escalate to the facilities manager; keep the store locked and secure.
Spill larger than the kit can manage	Clear the area, isolate it, and call for help.
Sharps injury	Wash, report at once, and attend occupational health the same day.

11. Escalation

Event	Inform	Timescale
Sharps injury	Clinician in charge and occupational health	Immediately; attend the same day
Missed collection or overfilled store	Facilities manager and unit manager	Same shift
Repeated container or segregation failures on one unit	Unit manager and quality team	Within one week

12. Monitoring and compliance

Indicator	Target	Method	Frequency	Owner
Containers closed and labelled at two-thirds full	100% of sampled containers	Inspection of 20 containers per unit	Monthly	Unit manager
Segregation correct at point of use	100% of sampled bins	Bin inspection, 20 per unit	Monthly	Unit manager
Collections recorded on WST-FRM-001	100% of collections	Review of manifests	Monthly	Facilities manager
Sharps injuries	Reported at once and reviewed	Incident data	Quarterly	Occupational health

13. Records

Record	Kept in	Retention
WST-FRM-001 collection record and waste manifest	Waste store file	As set by the institutional retention policy
Sharps injury reports	Occupational health file	As set by the institutional retention policy
Spill records	Unit file	As set by the institutional retention policy

14. Training and competence

- **Induction:** sharps handling, the point-of-use rule, colour segregation, the store, the spill kit and the injury procedure, with a supervised practical session.
- **Annual update:** segregation and spill response, with a check of the bins and the spill kit on the unit.

15. Related documents

ID	Title	Relationship
IPC-POL-001	Infection prevention and control programme	Sets the wider programme
ID-SOP-001-EN	Patient Identification and Specimen Labelling	Specimen waste and labelling

16. References

1. World Health Organization. Safe management of wastes from health-care activities, 2nd edition. Geneva: WHO; 2014. Source read: the PAHO record of the handbook. The handbook's specific categories and colour codes must be checked against the full text before publication. Available from: https://www.paho.org/en/documents/safe-management-wastes-health-care-activities-2nd-ed

17. Change history

Version	Date	Summary of change	Approved by
1.0		First approved version.	ASF Expert Committee
1.2		Substantive revision: point-of-use steps, segregation, store and spill procedure, injury response, worked examples and fill-level chart; references checked.	

Annex A. Sharps and waste audit record

Use this record for each audit session. Record one line per container checked. Enter Y, N or NA as shown in the column heading.

Date	Unit	Container closed and labelled (Y / N)	Closed at two-thirds full (Y / N)	Segregated correctly (Y / N)	Collection recorded (Y / N / NA)	Injury reported (Y / N / NA)	Comment

Date	Unit	Container closed and labelled (Y / N)	Closed at two-thirds full (Y / N)	Segregated correctly (Y / N)	Collection recorded (Y / N / NA)	Injury reported (Y / N / NA)	Comment