



# NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

## ENVIRONMENTAL GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

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### Medical Waste Disposal

The management of medical waste is not specifically addressed in Nebraska Title 132 Integrated Solid Waste Management Regulations. Most medical or veterinary wastes may be disposed at a permitted municipal solid waste disposal area as long as they have not been contaminated with something that is considered infectious. These non-infectious wastes may include dressings, laboratory wastes, animal bedding, or carcasses. The landfill or hauler of medical or veterinary wastes may have additional restrictions or disposal requirements specific to the disposal facility.

Infectious medical waste is specifically restricted by NDEQ regulations. Infectious waste is a special waste and is defined and regulated in Title 132. Chapter 1 of this regulation defines “infectious waste” as a solid waste capable of causing an infectious disease to humans. Therefore, if it is not capable of causing an infectious disease to humans, it is not classified as an infectious waste. Non-infectious medical wastes must be disposed of in a permitted solid waste disposal area. It is the responsibility of the generator of the waste to determine if it is infectious and to handle it properly. Infectious wastes may include dressings, lab wastes and a many other items.

According to Title 132, Chapter 13, 004, “infectious wastes shall not be disposed of at any solid waste disposal area unless such wastes are first rendered non-infectious by incineration, autoclaving, or other treatment method.” Prior written approval from the Department of Environmental Quality for disposal at a municipal solid waste landfill is not required for infectious wastes that have been rendered non-infectious.

**Note:** The provisions in Title 132, Chapter 13, 004 do not apply to infectious waste from households. See the Environmental Fact Sheet “Handling Household Medical Waste” for information on packaging and disposal of medical waste from home health care activities.

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### **TITLE-132 INTEGRATED SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT REGULATIONS**

Chapter 1 states:

**'Infectious waste'** shall mean a solid waste capable of causing an infectious disease to humans. For a waste to be deemed infectious, consideration will be given to those elements required in order for infection to occur. These elements include the presence of a pathogen or causative organism, of significant virulence, in an adequate dose, which is able to gain a portal of entry in a susceptible host. Infectious waste shall include, but not be limited to, substances from the following classifications:

- **Blood, Blood Products and Body Fluids.** This classification includes fluid blood, blood products and body fluids, and any items contaminated with any of these fluids, if a pourable quantity (ability of a liquid or semi-solid form to drip or flow) is present. The term blood and blood products includes serum, plasma, and other blood components. The term body fluid includes semen, vaginal secretions, cerebrospinal fluid, synovial fluid, pleural fluid, peritoneal fluid, pericardial fluid, amniotic fluid and any other body fluid visibly contaminated with blood.
- **Infectious Sharps Waste.** This classification includes all discarded items from diagnosis, treatment, or immunization which can potentially transmit disease by breaking the human skin, and includes hypodermic needles, scalpels, razor blades, breakable glass containers, blood vials, culture dishes, used slides, glass products and broken glass or other sharp items that have come into contact with or have been contaminated by material considered infectious.
- **Laboratory Waste.** This classification includes all cultures and stocks of infectious agents, including specimen cultures from medical and pathological laboratories, cultures and stocks from research and industrial laboratories, wastes from the production of biologicals, discarded live and attenuated vaccines, and culture dishes and devices used to transfer, inoculate, and mix cultures.
- **Contaminated Animal Waste.** This classification includes blood and body fluids, carcasses, body parts, excrement and bedding from animals contaminated with agents that may cause human disease.
- **Waste Identified by Infectious Waste Generators.** This classification includes those wastes determined by the infectious waste generator or the infectious waste generator's infectious control staff/committee to be treated as infectious waste because of the risk of disease posed by such waste.

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