

## GUIDANCE FOR SOLID WASTE AND BIOMEDICAL WASTE HANDLING

### COVID-19

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The purpose of this document is to provide guidance for health care facilities and solid waste handlers to differentiate waste streams that come into contact with COVID-19 patients in order to clearly identify which wastes are appropriate for the municipal waste streams and which wastes are identified as biomedical waste as defined in local, state, and federal regulations.

#### Waste Handling and Management Considerations for COVID-19

- Workers and employers should manage municipal solid waste with potential or known COVID-19 contamination like any other non-contaminated municipal waste.
- Use typical engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face and eye protection, to prevent exposure to the waste, including any contaminants in the materials.
- Such measures can help protect workers from sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.
- Do not touch your face.
- Wash your hands frequently when possible or use alcohol-based sanitizer as an alternative if handwashing is not available.
- Do not come to work if you feel sick.

#### What is Biomedical Waste?

- Waste with blood, excretions, exudates, or secretions from humans or animals with biosafety level 4 pathogens
  - **Note: According to current Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) information, COVID-19 is at biosafety level 3.**
- Human blood and blood components and materials containing free-flowing blood and blood products.
- Sharps that have been used in animal or human patients such as needles and syringes, IV tubing, scalpel blades, and lancets that have been removed from the original sterile package.
- Cultures and stocks of infectious agents to humans and laboratory waste that has come into contact with cultures and stocks of etiologic agents or blood specimens.
- Pathological wastes such as human tissues, organs, body parts and body fluids that are removed during surgery, procedures and autopsy
- Animal waste that are known to be infected with or that have been inoculated with pathogens infectious to humans

- City of Seattle only: Waste that may contain pathogens in sufficient concentrations to create a significant risk of disease, as determined by the biomedical waste generator's infection control staff/committee

**Common Healthcare Wastes That Are Not Biomedical Waste**

- Personal protective equipment (PPE) of health care workers e.g. disposable gloves, gown, and respiratory protection
- Spent dust filters
- Textile wastes e.g. bedding, towels, and clothing
- Human blood and blood products that are absorbed by materials such as bandages, napkins or commercial absorbents that fluid will not be released from the material and/or become airborne

**Who is a Biomedical Waste Generator?**

Home-generated biomedical waste is excluded from the definition of biomedical waste generator. Businesses and industries that are considered biomedical waste generators include but are not limited to the following:

General acute care hospitals Surgical clinics Urgent care clinics Intermediate care facilities Acute psychiatric hospitals Skilled nursing facility or convalescent hospitals In-patient care facilities for the developmentally disabled Chronic dialysis clinics	Community clinics Health maintenance organizations Laboratories Medical buildings Physicians’ offices and clinics Dental offices and clinics Funeral homes Veterinary offices and clinics
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**What Does a Biomedical Waste Generator Need To Do?**

As a biomedical waste generator, local regulations in Seattle and King County require the following:

- Have a Biomedical Waste Management Plan available for Public Health inspection
- Segregate biomedical waste from other wastes at the point of origin
- Properly store, label, and contain biomedical waste
- Have biomedical waste treated by a Public Health-permitted vendor if not treated onsite
- Have biomedical waste transported by a Public Health-permitted vendor

## What Needs To Go Into a Biomedical Waste Management Plan?

Work with your facility's safety team to develop your biomedical waste management plan. The following are some key components to include in your plan. Guidance for developing a plan is available online at <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/board-of-health/~media/depts/health/board-of-health/documents/code/BOH-Code-Title-10.ashx>. The plan should be available for inspection at Public Health's request. The biomedical waste management plan must include:

- Infection control staff/committee member(s) names and contact information
- Phone numbers of responsible individuals
- Definition of wastes handled by the system
- Department and individual responsibilities
- Procedures for waste identification, segregation, containment, transport, treatment, treatment monitoring, and disposal
- Contingency planning
- Identify staff/house-keeping training for biomedical waste identification
- Compliance with biomedical waste regulations
- Chief executive's officer endorsement letter

## Who should I contact if you have questions, concerns, or want to report mishandling?

Please contact Public Health Seattle & King County's Environmental Health Services Division at 206-263-9566 and ask to speak with the Solid Waste Program. Office hours are Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 8:00 am to 3:00 pm, and Tuesday and Thursday 10:30 am to 3:00 pm.

## References and Resources:

Chapter 70.95K RCW: <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=70.95K>

King County Board of Health Title 10: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/board-of-health/~media/depts/health/board-of-health/documents/code/BOH-Code-Title-10.ashx>

Seattle-Washington Municipal Code, Chapter 21.43 infectious waste management:

[https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal\\_code?nodeId=TIT21UT\\_SUBTITLE\\_IISOWA\\_CH21.43INWAMA](https://library.municode.com/wa/seattle/codes/municipal_code?nodeId=TIT21UT_SUBTITLE_IISOWA_CH21.43INWAMA)

CDC Interim Laboratory Biosafety Guidelines for Handling and Processing Specimens Associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/lab/lab-biosafety-guidelines.html>

OSHA Safety and Health Topics COVID-19: <https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/controlprevention.html>

CDC COVID-19 Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/caring-for-patients.html>

King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Solid Waste Division, Waste Acceptance Rule PUT-7-1-6-PR: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/about/policies/rules/utilities/put716pr.aspx>