



The Medical Waste Reporter



Announcements for Wisconsin's Medical Waste Generators

Reporting year 2008

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DNR, EPA Launch Healthcare Hazardous Waste Initiative

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have launched a new initiative aimed at helping Wisconsin's health care facilities manage hazardous waste.

The state-federal initiative features technical assistance, easy-to-follow guidance, self-audit checklists and inspections.

Joanie Burns, DNR hazardous waste management section chief, formally announced the initiative at the September meeting of Wisconsin Healthcare for a Healthy Environment (WH2E).

"Reception has been very positive – especially in light of the recent coverage about pharmaceuticals in the environment," said Burns, referring to a national Associated Press inquiry showing drugs in the water supplies for 24 major metropolitan areas.

"Healthcare facilities may use self-audit checklists to measure how they are doing with respect to state and federal hazardous waste requirements," Burns said. "We have based the checklists on the DNR hazardous waste inspection forms."

Both EPA and DNR will inspect healthcare facilities as part of the initiative. Although the

agencies may inspect any facility managing hazardous waste any time, relatively few health care facilities have been inspected by either agency. Federal inspections of health care facilities may begin in late 2008.

For more information about the initiative, visit [Overview of Waste Management at Health Care Facilities](#) on the DNR Web site.

WI Boasts Nine 2008 Practice GreenHealth Award Winners

Congratulations to these Practice GreenHealth (formerly Hospitals for a Healthy Environment, or H2E) Award winners in 2008!

Environmental Leadership Circle, new inductee:

- Sacred Heart Hospital – Eau Claire

Partner for Change Award:

- Mercy Walworth Hospital and Medical Center – Lake Geneva
- The Wisconsin Heart Hospital – Wauwatosa
- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare All Saints – Racine
- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare St. Francis – Milwaukee
- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare St. Joseph – Milwaukee

Champion for Change Award:

- PharmEcology Associates, LLC – Wauwatosa

Making Medicine Mercury Free Award:

- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare Elmbrook Memorial – Brookfield
- Wheaton Franciscan Healthcare St. Francis – Milwaukee

Does your facility have a medical waste reduction plan? It qualifies for a Partner for Change award. Have you eliminated the use of mercury? You have earned the Making Medicine Mercury Free award.

For information about the awards, visit www.practicegreenhealth.org/awards.

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WH2E Forges Ahead

Wisconsin Healthcare for a Healthy Environment (WH2E) had a solid first year. The group met quarterly in 2008, with 30 to 65 attending each meeting. WH2E also offered training in December on doing hazardous waste self-audits.

Wayne Pattengill, chairman of WH2E's formational steering committee, explains, "WH2E is a great resource to assist the healthcare industry in improving the health of our communities and environment in the areas we serve."

"We want to provide a forum where healthcare providers, waste companies, trade organizations and state agencies can work together to address healthcare's environmental issues," Pattengill adds.

One of those issues, pharmaceutical waste, was discussed in 2008 and will be revisited in the spring of 2009, in light of the EPA's proposal to include pharmaceuticals as "universal waste" (for more information, see www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/wastetypes/universal/pharm.htm)

Other topics for 2009 include non-pharmaceutical hazardous wastes (January 16th near Wausau), infectious and medical waste reduction (June) and green building (September or October).

To learn more about WH2E or to join it, visit www.uwm.edu/shwec/wh2e/index.cfm. People on DNR's technical assistance email list receive notice of WH2E events. To join the list, see the contact box below.

DNR STAFF CONTACTS:

Medical waste questions and to receive e-mail announcements about medical waste:

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Mercury → Reduction ← News

Municipalities Sign Green Tier Charter to Reduce Mercury

Fifteen Wisconsin municipalities have entered into an agreement with DNR to develop community mercury reduction programs.

The agreement, known as a Green Tier charter, describes how the communities intend to reduce mercury discharges to their wastewater treatment plants before being required to do so.

Municipal wastewater staff will work with hospitals, dental clinics and other healthcare providers to help them implement mercury best management practices. Most of the outreach will take place in 2009.

The communities are: Burlington, Cedarburg, Fort Atkinson, Jackson, Janesville, Marshfield, Medford, Plover, Rice Lake, Sparta, Sun Prairie, Superior, Western Racine County Sewerage District, Whitewater and Wisconsin Rapids.

For more information about this charter, see dnr.wi.gov/org/caer/cea/environmental/participants/mercury/index.htm

HCWH, WHO Reduce Mercury-Based Med Devices Worldwide

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have launched a global partnership to substitute mercury-based medical devices with safer, accurate and affordable alternatives.

HCWH and WHO aim to replace no less than 70 percent of all mercury thermometers and blood pressure devices around the world with digital and aneroid alternatives.

The organizations invite health care leaders, government officials, non-governmental organizations and private sector participants to support this environmental health initiative.

Anyone interested may join via the partnership's Web site, www.mercuryfreehealthcare.org.

SHWEC Helps Wisconsin Healthcare Reduce Waste

The University of Wisconsin Extension's Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center (SHWEC) continued its outreach to healthcare in 2008 by providing free waste audits to healthcare facilities, student interns to work on pollution prevention projects, support for WH2E, and pharmaceutical pollution prevention resources.

To request a free waste audit or to find out more, contact [Steve Brachman](mailto:Steve.Brachman@uw.edu) at 414-227-3160 or visit www4.uwm.edu/shwec/wh2e/index.cfm

Is it Time to Switch to Reusable Sharps Containers?

Healthcare providers that have switched from disposable sharps containers to reusable containers report cost savings, improved safety and a happier, less-harried staff.

Sounds like a win-win.

Janet Brown of Practice GreenHealth (formerly H2E) recommends taking into account the following factors to ensure true cost comparison:

For disposable containers, consider:

- Who changes them? Is this shared? Does one person bring from patient room to soiled and then another from soiled to waste area? (at Janet's facility many individuals handled containers)
- Frequency of overfilled containers with current system
- Incidents of needle sticks associated with disposable system
- "Cost" per needle stick
- Incidents of removal of containers with inadequate closure of top (when overfilled, tough to close)
- Incidents of piled up containers in collection areas
- Number of containers purchased
- Efficiency of system: scheduled change? On call? Inspection?
- Cost for disposal of containers
- Storage space for disposable containers

“The potential impact on the red-bag waste stream alone would sway many a green-minded, efficiency-conscious hospital to switch...”

- Catherine Zimmer, Minnesota Technical Assistance Program

- Environmental impact of disposables headed to incinerator or landfill, after treatment.
- Aesthetics of container
- Ease of use
- Types of containers available for varying needs.
- Installing and moving brackets for room upgrades and new construction. With areas constantly under renovation, moving containers is an ongoing issue.

For reusable containers, consider:

- Number of individuals no longer handling sharps (in Janet's hospital, this went from way too many, to one contracted individual. Her in-house staffers were thrilled.)
- Does the full service program include an employee whose sole responsibility is to collect sharps?
- Incidents of overfilled containers
- Aesthetics of container
- Needle sticks associated with less overfilled containers
- Elimination of disposable container headed for treatment and disposal
- Cost for service
- Moving and installing brackets included in contract
- Various size containers

“With transition to any new sharps program, there is a time of learning,” Janet notes. “Find the right technician for a facility to

ensure quality response and management of program, [and identify the] high generating areas (blood drawing areas, operating rooms, medication carts, critical care areas) and pick up times when there is less waiting time for container transfer.”

Janet also recommends that facilities provide ongoing education about what does and does not go into a sharps container. She also suggests that containers be removed promptly while the schedule is adjusted to meet the needs of the high generating areas.

For more information, contact Janet Brown at (413) 253-0254. You may also want to read *An Issue that can't be Contained* in the May 2008 issue of “Materials Management in Health Care” magazine at www.matmanmag.com, (search its publications for "reusable bins").

NEW RESOURCES

To learn about the latest resources throughout the year, join DNR's medical waste e-mail announcement list (see contact box on page 2).

Healthcare waste

DNR medical waste Web pages – (coming soon) what is infectious waste, sharps disposal, sharps collection, reducing medical waste, donating medical items and more
dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/medinf/index.htm

DNR healthcare waste Web pages – how to manage the many different types of waste generated at health care facilities
dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/healthcare/index.htm

SHWEC Wisconsin healthcare waste project – summer student internships, WH2E, free waste assessments and more from the UW-Extension Solid and Hazardous Waste Education Center
www.uwm.edu/shwec/wh2e/index.cfm

Practice GreenHealth (formerly Hospitals for a Healthy Environment) has a new Web site
www.practicegreenhealth.org/

Safety Compliance

OSHA's On-site Consultation Program helps small businesses provide a safer working environment for their employees
www.osha.gov/dcsp/smallbusiness/consult.html

OSHA Safety and Health Topics for Healthcare Facilities – Health and safety issues associated with healthcare facilities
www.osha.gov/SLTC/healthcarefacilities/index.html

OSHA Hospital eTool helps you identify health and safety hazards and solutions in healthcare
www.osha.gov/SLTC/etools/hospital/mainpage.html

Energy Conservation

The **U.S. Department of Energy** launched its **EnergySmart Hospitals** program in July 2008. Check out their publications, including *Energy Smart Hospitals: Retrofitting Existing Facilities*, *Quick-Win Energy Efficiency Tips for Facility Managers and Operators*
www1.eere.energy.gov/buildings/energysmarthospitals/

Pharmaceutical waste

DNR pharmaceutical waste Web pages – managing and reducing pharmaceutical waste for households and non-households
dnr.wi.gov/org/aw/wm/pharm/index.htm

Practice GreenHealth's *Managing Pharmaceutical Wastes, a 10-Step Blueprint for Healthcare Facilities in the United States*, **UPDATED AUGUST 2008** is available at www.practicegreenhealth.org under *Managing Pharmaceutical Waste*

EPA Office of Water Web page on Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products
www.epa.gov/waterscience/ppcp/

The **Drug Take-Back Network** is a central resource for drug take-back programs around the country www.takebacknetwork.com

Laboratories

Environmental Health and Engineering offers these resources about lab safety
www.eheinc.com/resources_whitepapers.htm

Recycling

EPA paper recycling Web site -- a comprehensive overview of paper recycling in the United States
www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/materials/paper/index.htm

Construction and Demolition Materials EPA's toolkit to help you "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle" them
www.epa.gov/epawaste/consERVE/rrr/imr/cdm/index.htm

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