

## Problem

Workers and others at the workplace can inadvertently be exposed to the risk of a needle stick injury from a contaminated syringe, which may present a health risk. Syringes may be clearly visible or may be disposed of within containers or hidden amongst other rubbish.

Therefore it is imperative that workers receive adequate training in dealing with and disposing of inappropriately disposed syringes.

## Solution

If a syringe is discovered the following steps should be taken, as a minimum, to protect against the potential health risks associated with a needle stick injury.

- Step 1** Do not touch the syringe before obtaining the designated equipment (where available). Do not improvise equipment if the designated equipment is unavailable.
- Step 2** Do not attempt to handle the syringe by hand. Warn others of the threat. If the syringe poses an immediate threat to the well-being of others in the area, the safest way to retrieve the syringe is to hold the barrel of the syringe in a gloved hand.
- Step 3** Obtain the designated equipment, which should include gloves, a sealable, puncture resistant, container or an approved contaminated waste container, and forceps or tongs.
- Step 4** Take the equipment to the syringe.
- Step 5** Wear puncture resistant gloves.
- Step 6** Open the container and place on a stable, level surface. Do not hold the container because a misdirected needle may contact the hand or forearm and result in a needle stick injury.
- Step 7** Do not attempt to bend, break or re-cap the needle.
- Step 8** Using forceps or tongs, pick up the syringe, preferably at the opposite end (barrel) of the needle.
- Step 9** Carefully place the syringe into the container, needle end first (DO NOT force the needle into the container. Obtain a larger container if the syringe does not fit.
- Step 10** Seal the container.
- Step 11** Contact the local council or health service for information on appropriate disposal of the syringe
- Step 12** If tongs or another designated pick up tool has been used, clean the item with detergent and warm water (while wearing impermeable gloves), then immerse the tool in a bleach solution for at least one minute. Air-dry and replace tongs/tool in appropriate area for future use.

## Benefit

The implementation of effective and safe handling and disposal procedures of syringes provides protection for employees, or others at the workplace.

Reference: National Code of Practice for the Control of Work-related Exposure to Hepatitis and HIV (Blood-borne) Viruses [NOHSC:2010(2003)]2nd Edition December 2003.