

DEQ Press Releases (Sharps Disposal Regulations in Michigan)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 1, 2008

Contact: Robert McCann
(517) 241-7397

Sharps Disposal Regulations in Michigan

Recent news reports have erroneously indicated that sharps (needles, syringes, lancets, etc.) generated by Michigan residents during the treatment of medical conditions in the home, such as self-administered insulin injections for diabetics, must be disposed of in accordance with new Department of Environmental Quality regulations and may not be disposed of in the regular household trash. This is not the case, as home-generated medical waste, including sharps, are not currently regulated in Michigan, and new DEQ regulations have not been issued as indicated in the reports.

The Medical Waste Regulatory Act regulates medical waste disposal at facilities such as physician/dental practices, hospitals, and veterinary offices, but medical waste generated in the home is specifically exempted from the regulations.

Delivery of sharps in an appropriate puncture-proof plastic or metal container to a local collection center, such as a landfill, a household hazardous waste program, a local hospital that provides a community sharps disposal program, or a medical waste collection company is strongly recommended by the DEQ, however, as placement of the collection container in regular household trash can expose waste collection company workers and landfill operators to potential needle stick injuries.

The recommended disposal of syringes and other sharps generated in the home can be found in a DEQ pamphlet entitled "The Point is? Needles Hurt!?" This pamphlet, a list of sharps collection programs and services by county, and other information can be found on the Medical Waste Regulatory Program's Web site at <http://www.michigan.gov/deqmedwaste>. Additional information can be obtained by contacting the DEQ's Medical Waste Regulatory Program at (517) 335-1146 or (517) 241-1320, or by e-mail at medicalwaste@michigan.gov.

"Protecting Michigan's Environment, Ensuring Michigan's Future"