



Procedure: Sharps handling

Purpose

This procedure outlines requirements for handling sharps and dealing with sharps injuries at the Australian National University (the University). This procedure meets the compliance requirements of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011 (Cth)*, the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011 (Cth)*.

Definitions

Control – anything that is implemented to eliminate or reduce the risk of a hazard.

Exposure – occurs when a person, property or the environment comes into contact with a hazard. The four routes of exposure for people are: inhalation, skin absorption, ingestion and inoculation.

Hazard – anything that has the potential to cause harm.

Risk – risk is the effect of uncertainty on the University's work health and safety and is measured in terms of the likelihood of an event occurring and the consequences if it does.

Sharps – are objects or devices having sharp points or protuberances or cutting edges, capable of cutting or piercing the skin or the container in which they are packaged. This includes plastic pipette tips.

Procedure

Emergency Information

1. Emergency needle–stick injury query be initially directed to your first aid officer, local area management or safety officer, and then contact the Work Environment Group (WEG) via whs@anu.edu.au or calling extension x 52193. Emergency Services response is coordinated through the local area and ANU Security.
2. For after–hours emergency services response, contact ANU Security (x52249).
3. Members of the campus community who find a sharp on campus should not attempt to dispose of the sharp themselves. Contact ANU Security (x52249) who

will have appropriate equipment and training in safely picking up and disposing of sharps.

Part 1: Introduction

4. This procedure was developed by University to ensure the safe management of sharps within the University. In managing sharps, the University adopts a risk management approach to minimise the risks to staff, students, contractors and visitors in relation to the handling and disposal of sharps associated within the range of research, teaching and operational tasks undertaken within the University.

Part 2: Purpose

5. This document outlines procedures for safe work with sharps at the University.

6. Sharps are objects or devices having sharp points or protuberances or cutting edges, capable of cutting or piercing the skin. Examples of sharps may include; needles, scalpel blades, Pasteur pipettes, plastic pipette tip, broken glass, razor blades or other similar objects.

7. Sharps pose a risk of injury due to their ability to puncture or cut the skin. Additionally, some sharps may be contaminated with human blood or body fluids, microorganisms Genetically Manipulated Organism (GMO) or otherwise, chemicals or radioactive material.

8. There are local areas at the University where professions can have contact with sharps. These may include; researchers, technical and animal handling staff, medical school staff and students, gardens and grounds staff, security staff, housekeeping staff and first aid officers.

9. It is the responsibility of the local area to ensure that staff working with sharps are appropriately trained and aware of procedures for safe work with sharps.

Responsibilities

10. Supervisors are responsible for:

- Undertaking a risk assessment for the use and handling of all sharps, in consultation with the relevant staff.
- Managing, documenting and addressing the risks associated with Sharps. Where the risk/s are considered unacceptable, the work shall not be undertaken. Modification to the handling protocol conducted, in ensuring risks are managed.

- Providing and maintaining appropriate facilities and resources to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.
- Providing clear and consistent supervision, instruction and training.

11. Sharps users are responsible for:

- Adhering and contributing to safe operating procedures and guidelines to ensure not only their safety, but also that of fellow staff, students, contractors, visitors, and the environment.
- Using appropriate facilities and resources to ensure a safe and healthy work environment.
- Reporting incidents via the University's online incident notification system Figtree.
- Managing and disposing of sharps in an approved manner.

Part 3: Managing Sharps at the ANU

Use or handling of Sharps

12. Prior to commencing work with a sharp, a thorough risk assessment must be undertaken.

- Consider whether it is possible to complete the work without using sharps.
- Consider whether there is a plastic, unbreakable or non-sharp alternative.
- If a sharp must be used, ensure that appropriate controls are in place, such as provision of Australian Standards (AS) approved sharps containers, training and other administrative controls, and use of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Depending on how the sharp is to be used, vaccination against various diseases may be required by the University, see the [Immunisation Procedure](#) for details.

13. All staff must receive training by experienced staff in the safe use of sharps before commencing work with sharps.

14. All areas that come into contact with, or use sharps must have Australian Standards approved sharps containers available for disposal of sharps. The sharps container should be located within arm's reach of where the sharp is being used.

15. Sharps must not be passed hand to hand to another person for disposal or use; the initial user must dispose of the sharp immediately after use.

16. Forceps or a blade removal device must be used to remove scalpel blades. A

tool should also be used to attach a scalpel blade where possible.

17. The sharp must be placed in the sharps container without using force to push the Sharp down. Allow the sharp to drop into the container. Never put hands or fingers into a sharps container.
18. Place the sharp in the disposal container with the sharp end down.
19. Do not recap hypodermic needles after use. Do not deliberately bend, break or otherwise manipulate a needle by hand.
20. Once a sharps container reaches the 'fill' line, it must be closed and no more sharps added.
21. Full, single-use sharps containers must be disposed of via incineration. Re-usable sharps containers be handled for emptying and cleaning only by the approved contractor.
22. Sharps containers should not be autoclaved due to the risk of the container deforming and the sharps penetrating the plastic.
23. Never line a sharps container with a bag, or use for any other purpose other than disposal of sharps (e.g. as general waste bins).
24. Gardeners or housekeeping staff who may come across used hypodermic needles in the course of their work should be supplied with appropriate training and equipment to pick up the sharps, (e.g. tongs) and an AS approved sharps container for disposal of the sharp.
25. Contractors and University staff undertaking demolition work must ensure the removal of any sharps containers present from the building or structure prior to work commencing.

Procedure for a Sharps injury

26. The procedure varies depending on whether the sharp was clean or possibly contaminated. In all cases of sharps injury, WEG must be notified of the incident as soon as possible via email or telephone and the University's online incident notification system Figtree.
27. If the injury was with a clean/uncontaminated sharp or a sharp contaminated with a chemical or radioactive material, or a needle that has been inside a 'clean' (uninfected) animal:
 - Wash the site thoroughly with warm water and soap, but do not scrub.
 - If the injury involves the eyes, nose or mouth, rinse the area thoroughly with copious amounts of warm water or saline (do not use antiseptics).
 - Dispose of the sharp into an appropriate sharps container.

- Consult with the local workplace safety officer and the supervisor of the affected person as to whether medical attention is required.

28. Injury with a sharp that may be contaminated with human pathogens, human blood or body fluids, potentially zoonotic organisms, or a sharp of unknown origin:

- Wash the site thoroughly with warm water and soap, but do not scrub.
- Rinse with 80% v/v ethanol if available, or similar antiseptic solution (eg. chlorhexidine).
- If the injury involves the eyes, nose or mouth, rinse the area thoroughly with copious amounts of warm water or saline (do not use antiseptics).
- Apply a sterile dressing to the wound. Apply pressure through the dressing to stem any bleeding if necessary.
- Place the sharp in a labelled, empty sharps container in case further analysis is required.
- Visit a doctor as soon as possible (preferably within two hours). Consult with local workplace safety officer and the WEG about what may be required at the doctor visit (what blood test is necessary, prophylactic medication, follow-up testing etc.).
- If there was an exposure to or spillage of regulated gene technology PC2 material, WEG is required to notify the Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) as soon as possible.
- WEG will also notify Comcare of the incident as a serious personal injury.
- The affected person offered post-exposure counselling in conjunction with medical review.
- Investigation of the incident by WEG in conjunction with the local area will occur.

Training obligations/courses

29. The University's [Biological Safety](#) course covers sharps handling. Local area induction must cover relevant aspects of biological safety and sharps handling requirements.

Document information

Title	Sharps handling
Document Type	Procedure
Document Number	ANUP_000679
Version	7
Purpose	To inform staff of the procedure for handling sharps and dealing with sharps injuries at the University.
Audience	Staff
Category	Administrative
Topic	Health, Safety & Environment
Subtopic	Occupational Health & Safety
Effective Date	10 Dec 2018
Review Date	10 Dec 2021
Responsible Officer	Director, Human Resources (director.hr@anu.edu.au)
Approved By	Chief Operating Officer (chris.grange@anu.edu.au)
Contact Area	Human Resources Division (director.hr@anu.edu.au)
Authority	
Printed On	18 Jun 2019

Please ensure you have the latest version of this document from the Policy Library website before referencing this.