



TRANSPORTATION OF REGULATED MEDICAL WASTE CONTAMINATED WITH THE 2019 NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

January 31, 2020

The Healthcare Waste Institute (HWI) developed this interim guidance to provide information about the evolving 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak first identified in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Chinese authorities identified the 2019-nCoV which has resulted in infections beginning in China and spreading to other nations including the United States. In China, the virus has spread from patients to healthcare workers. Presently, there is no evidence of ongoing transmission of 2019-nCoV in the United States. OSHA states that without sustained human-to-human transmission, most American workers are not at significant risk of infection. However, some workers involved in healthcare (including clinical laboratory personnel) may be exposed to travelers infected with the virus.

The federal government continues to evaluate the transmissibility and severity of 2019-nCoV. However, it is anticipated that infected people may be able to spread the 2019-nCoV through coughing or sneezing.

Waste management workers

OSHA guidance for waste management is based on the CDC's determination that 2019-nCoV is not a Category A infectious substance.

- OSHA states that workers and employers should manage waste contaminated with 2019-nCoV as they would other regulated medical waste. OSHA also states that workers use appropriate engineering and administrative controls, safe work practices, and PPE, such as puncture-resistant gloves and face/eye protection, to prevent worker exposure to medical waste, including sharps and other items that can cause injuries or exposures to infectious materials.
- HWI suggests requesting customers to utilize the following as guidance for managing 2019-nCoV materials:

FACTS:

- [Existing OSHA standards](#) apply to protecting workers from 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).
- The 2019-nCoV can cause pneumonia, which may be severe.
- Signs and symptoms of infection include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. People infected with the virus may have these, as well as other (or no), signs and symptoms.
- Experience from previous respiratory diseases caused by other coronaviruses, including [Middle East Respiratory Syndrome \(MERS\)](#) and [Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome \(SARS\)](#), suggests that some limited person-to-person spread will continue to occur.

- Ensure red bags are properly closed and tied with an overhand balloon knot so that they are leakproof before being moved.
- Red bags should be placed in a container with a secure lid.
- All sharps containers should be fully closed and placed in a bag and placed in a container. Preferably, single use disposable sharps containers should be used in place of reusable sharps containers.
- Containers should be single use and in compliance with DOT regulatory requirements for regulated medical waste.
- Single use container can be treated at a permitted medical waste facility.
- Avoid taking medical waste to facility that shreds in an open atmosphere prior to treatment to reduce potential worker exposure. Shredding in an enclosed treatment process is acceptable.
- Notify hauler about wastes that contain 2019-nCoV.

Links:

- https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/index.html
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/background/medical-waste.html>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol/guidelines/environmental/index.html>