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Hypodermic Needles Illegal in Trash September 1st

New Law Takes Effect Requiring Home Injectors to Find New Options

Sacramento, CA – August 25, 2008 -- Home generated hypodermic needles, or sharps, are forbidden in waste containers beginning in September when California Senate Bill 1305 takes effect. As of September 1st, all home-generated sharps waste must be transported in an approved sharps container and managed by a hazardous waste facility, medical waste generator facility, or a facility managed as part of a mail back program.

With the April 2006 passing of SB 1305, California became one of the first states in the nation to ban sharps waste from the residential waste stream.

Surveys show that more than 3 billion needles and syringes used by self-injectors end up in trash or recycling containers, or are flushed down toilets. This improper disposal puts sanitation workers and the public at risk of needle sticks and serious infections. The new law will prohibit needles in any household waste, including recycling or green waste bins.

According to Kent Stoddard, Vice President of Public Affairs for Waste Management, the company strongly supported SB 1305 because of its concern for the safety of its employees who handle solid waste on a daily basis.

“There are safe and convenient alternatives such as mail-back programs that allow for the proper handling of sharps,” Stoddard said. “With the ban taking effect, we hope to see a big reduction in the growing number of needles that are found in the waste stream.”

Stoddard said that today, more than 9 million Americans legally self inject each year to treat numerous conditions, including diabetes, hepatitis, multiple sclerosis, infertility, and allergies. With advances in healthcare and the desire of patients to receive medical care in their homes, there is a rise in the legal use of self-injected drugs. What's more, the increase is expected to multiply dramatically over the next decade, with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention projecting that more than 7 percent of the U.S. population will have diabetes by 2050.

To date, several cities in California participate in sharps mail-back programs including, Santa Ana, Laguna Beach and Mission Viejo. These programs provide individuals with a safe and convenient way of disposing of used hypodermic needles via a postage-prepaid shipping container delivered safely by the United States Postal Service to a certified medical waste facility, where it is destroyed.

Waste Management, Inc., based in Houston, Texas, is the leading provider of comprehensive waste management services in North America. The company is a leading developer, operator and owner of waste-to-energy and landfill gas-to-energy facilities in the United States. For more information see www.thinkgreen.com.

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