

# Needle Stick Injuries

WHS-WI-313

## Applicability

SMS

## Publication Requirement

Internal and External

## Primary Source

Replaces previous guideline (WHS-313, version 1.1)

## Document Status

Version #	Date Reviewed	Prepared by	Reviewed by	Endorsed	Approved
2.0	3 September 2015	Corporate Work Health and Safety Coordinator	Corporate Work Health and Safety Manager	Executive General Manager Enterprise Services	Operational Safety and Environment Review Committee

## Amendment Record

Amendment Version #	Date Reviewed	Description of Amendment
2.0	19 August 2015	Revised document template used for formatting.

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## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

This work instruction provides information on the safe handling and disposal of sharp items (or “sharps”) that may be contaminated with blood or bodily fluid, such as needles used for injection.

### 1.2 Scope

This work instruction applies to all of ARTC.

### 1.3 Procedure Owner

The Executive General Manager Enterprise Services owns this document.

### 1.4 Accountabilities

ARTC Managers will:

- remind workers to assess any known high risk worksites for discarded sharps
- ensure gloves and/or sharps handling equipment is available for workers where required
- in the event of a needle stick injury or an injury from a sharp, ensure there is an appropriate first aid and medical response, that the employee injury hotline is notified, and that counselling is offered to the worker (facilitated by the relevant Human Resources Advisor)
- ensure sharps located on ARTC sites are removed and safely disposed of

Workers must follow this work instruction if they are to remove any sharps. Should workers consider a situation unsafe, they must cease work and speak with their work supervisor.

### 1.5 References

Our [Work Health and Safety Procedure](#) is a parent document to this work instruction.

## 2 Work Instruction

### 2.1 Protective equipment

If a worker is required to kneel at a worksite then they must conduct a visual inspection before kneeling. Rubber matting that is thick enough to prevent needles from penetrating may be used to reduce the risk of needle stick injury (or injury from a sharp) if required.

Workers will not wear jogger type boots if working in an area where there is a known risk of needle stick injuries – leather boots are to be worn.

If work must be carried out at night, additional lighting will be supplied by using flood lights for planned work, or vehicle flood lighting in emergency situations.

## 2.2 Collecting discarded needles, syringes and other sharps

- a. do not put unprotected hands where you cannot see them and where they may be exposed to sharps, such as inside a garbage bin, under rails, cable troughing, water filled pits, or by removing ballast by hand
- b. pick up needles, syringes and sharps if safe to do so.

note: the method you use may depend on the situation, so consider the following:

- while tools may be used, caution must be taken so that the sharp cannot be flicked or thrown from the tool being used
  - you may move a sharp in to a sharps container by hand, however if you do so wear appropriate protective gloves, such as cut, needle and puncture resistant gloves
  - do not attempt to bend, break or recap a needle as part of this step.
- c. place needles in a sharps container or a sharps disposal unit (a rigid walled, wide mouthed, puncture resistant container) which should be labelled “Sharps Only” or “Sharps: Biohazard” (note: in the event of a needle stick injury, consider sealing in a portable glass container to assist medical assessment and treatment as per section 2.3 below)
  - d. sharps containers must be sealed before they are sent for disposal through a biohazard waste disposal contractor or needle exchange facility.

note: garbage bags or bins should not be used. Needles or other sharp items can stick through garbage bags and could injure the people who empty the garbage bins.

## 2.3 Needle Stick Injury (or injury from a sharp)

In the event of a needle stick injury (or injury from a sharp):

- a. flush the wound with clean running water and soap as soon as possible  
(note: if water and soap are not available, you may use an antiseptic or alcohol based wipe on the wound)
- b. apply a dressing
- c. safely dispose of needle / sharp  
  
note: if able to carry securely (for example, in a sealed glass container) take the sharp to the local doctor or hospital to enable examination (this may help give quicker results)
- d. report the incident as soon as possible to an ARTC Manager and to the Employee Injury Hotline (1800 686 130) or to the employee’s employer (if the worker is a contractor)
- e. attend the local doctor or hospital for testing and/or vaccination

Note:

The [ARTC Employee Assistance Program](#) provides a confidential counselling and support service for ARTC Managers and ARTC employees. This service may be of assistance in the event of a needle stick injury (or injury from a sharp). To access, call 1300 361 008.