

Regulated Medical Waste

Federal, state and local guidelines and regulations specify the categories of medical waste that are subject to regulation and outline the requirements associated with treatment and disposal. State regulations also address the degree or amount of contamination that defines the discarded item as regulated medical waste (RMW). Use the [RMW State Locator](#) to find your state-specific regulations.

Any facility that generates RMW should have a management plan in place to ensure health and environmental safety as per federal, state and local regulations.

- The plan should address the collection, handling and disposal of RMW.
- Designate a person or persons to be responsible for establishing, monitoring, reviewing and administering the plan.

What is RMW?

RMW, also known as “biohazardous” or “infectious medical” waste, is waste that poses a sufficient risk of infection transmission during handling and disposal. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) defines RMW in the following categories:

- Liquid or semi-liquid blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM) such as blood specimens, blood products and other body-fluid specimens
- Items contaminated with blood or OPIM, which would release these substances in a liquid or semi-liquid state if compressed
- Items that are caked with dried blood or OPIM and are capable of releasing blood or OPIM materials during handling
- Sharps (e.g., needles and scalpels) contaminated with blood
- Pathological and microbiological waste containing blood or OPIM

Measure to safely handle RMW

OSHA has specified measures designed to protect workers who generate and handle RMW from the point of generation to disposal, including:

- Warning labels with the universal biohazard symbol, followed by the term “biohazard,” are included on bags/containers of RMW
- RMW items are placed in a leak-resistant biohazard bag
- Sharps are placed in puncture-resistant containers (e.g., sharps containers) at the point of use
 - Sharps: scalpel blades, needles and syringes, unused sterile sharps and discarded slides or tubes with container blood.
- A well-ventilated storage area with limited access is designated.