

HEALTH AND SAFETY

SAFETY POLICY & ARRANGEMENTS



Date: **October 2023**

Issue: **No. 7**

Subject: **Needles - Handling and Disposal of**

Introduction

This document forms part of the National Ice Centre's organisational written safety policy arrangements.

Departments, services or teams may consider it appropriate to develop additional guidance and systems of work on specific work related activities.

Where proposals, additional guidance or changes to systems of work will have an impact on health, safety and welfare, this will be discussed and agreed at the Health & Safety Committee.

If you have any questions or require further information or support on the contents of this document, please contact the NIC Health & Safety Advisor or Corporate Safety Advice.

Overview Of Management & Colleague Responsibilities

Manager Responsibilities

Below is an overview of the responsibilities which is intended to support managers in identifying their key duties that need to be taken to comply with the requirements of this document and the safety management systems of the National Ice Centre.

- Managers need to ensure that a risk assessment has been completed where it is reasonably foreseeable that exposure to discarded hypodermic needles and syringes could occur.
- Managers need to implement the control measures identified within the risk assessment.
- Managers need to ensure the provision of suitable information to colleagues on the safe handling and disposal of needles and syringes is provided
- Managers need to maintain information that identifies where needles and syringes have been found.
- Managers must complete a separate Hepatitis B risk assessment where colleagues are likely to be exposed to discarded needles and syringes.
- Managers must ensure all needle-stick injuries are reported correctly and each incident is fully investigated.

Employee Responsibilities

The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 section 7 requires all employees to consider their own health & safety and the safety of others.

As an employee of the National Ice Centre, if you have concerns in relation to health & safety that is likely to cause you or someone else, injury or ill health then you must ensure that the concern is communicated to your manager immediately.

You are also required to co-operate with the management of the National Ice Centre to ensure compliance with the health & safety arrangements, policies and procedures and work to the

Legal Framework

There is no specific legislation in relation to the removal or handling of needles however, existing health and safety legislation including the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 and the Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999 deal with ensuring that safe systems of work and safe working environments are considered.

This legislative framework also extends to the ensuring the completion of risk assessments for potentially hazardous activities which may potentially include this issue.

This document identifies the policy for dealing with needles and must be complied with.

Managers need to ensure that all activities where needles have been found, relevant risk assessments are completed or reviewed and where applicable, further control measures are implemented.

Needle-stick Injuries

All used hypodermic needles and syringes must always be treated as being potentially contaminated.

The Department of Health suggests that the risk of acquiring a blood borne infection following a needle-stick injury depends on the infectious status of the needle user.

Where the needle is known to be infected the risk of acquiring the infection will vary depending on a variety of other factors.

Even though infection rates are low, should the skin be punctured or broken by a used needle, infection could potentially occur and therefore measures to reassure staff and give the appropriate support through contact with Occupational Health needs to take place as early as possible.

Where Have Needles & Syringes Been Found

Needles have been found in a wide variety of locations and include bins planters, parks and playgrounds.

In addition to the open locations, needles have also been found in bottles, cans, paper bags, refuse sacks.

Risk Assessment

Both the Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999 and the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH), require the completion of a risk assessment of work that is likely to involve exposure to substances hazardous to health.

This would be considered to include the potential exposure to the various diseases that would potentially occur from contact with needles.

To ensure the assessment process is completed correctly, a specific risk assessment template 'Exposure to Discarded Hypodermic Needles and Syringes' has been developed.

Managers need to ensure that this assessment is complete where there is a likely risk of needle stick injury occurring.

The assessment needs to identify the appropriate controls that are required to complete the identified tasks.

Managers will also need to ensure that the information on the risk assessment has been communicated to all colleagues that are involved in the activities covered by the assessment.

Control Measures

Wherever reasonably practicable, injuries must be prevented by removing the need for employees to handle or come into contact with potentially contaminated needles and syringes.

Where an employee or group of employees have been identified as being at risk, managers must implement controls, training, information and instructions employees.



These controls may include:

- keeping the number of employees exposed or likely to be exposed as low as possible.
- implementing safe systems of work.
- making arrangements for the safe handling of potentially contaminated materials.
- instituting hygiene measures (washing facilities, prohibiting eating, drinking or smoking in areas where there is a risk of contamination).
- making available vaccines to those who are not already immune (e.g. Hepatitis B, tetanus).
- provision of suitable Personal Protective Equipment and other equipment

Managers need to ensure that their colleagues

- are aware of the risks involved in the work both direct and indirect.
- have an understanding of the preventative measures in place.
- use the personal protective equipment that has been issued based on the completed risk assessment.
- have access to appropriate equipment, e.g. tongs, sharps box and sterile wipes
- have received appropriate training and information on precautions, first aid measures and use of equipment, etc.

Action To Be Taken Following A Needle-stick Injury

Managers need to give any employee who has received a needle-stick injury, suitable support and information.

The colleague needs to be advised to visit the emergency department of the nearest hospital or other medical facility for assistance and support at the earliest opportunity.

Managers need to ensure that in **all** circumstances, contact is made with Occupational Health as soon as possible to ensure the appropriate medical records can be maintained.

Managers must review all relevant risk assessments following any incident involving needles.

Reporting Needle-stick Injuries

Managers need to ensure that all Needle-stick injuries are identified as an accident and reported using the accident reporting system and a full investigation by the manager is then undertaken.

This investigating information will include

- the work that was being undertaken at the time of the incident,
- what training was given to the injured person,
- the follow up action –(who was the injured person referred to),
- what Personal Protective Equipment being used,
- any outcomes of investigation with copies of relevant risk assessments
- other relevant information or documentation

A needle-stick incident is not reported to the HSE under the RIDDOR regulations until it is confirmed that the injured person has received an occupational disease resulting from the incident.

Where infection is confirmed, The HSE **must** be informed as a 'Report of Infectious Disease'.

Please refer to the Safety Policy and Arrangements 'Accident, Near Miss and Work Related Ill Health' gives more detailed information on both the corporate accident reporting procedures and compliance with the RIDDOR regulations.

Following any needle-stick injury, Managers must contact occupational health and good practice would also identify you should contact the local safety representative so they may also undertake their own investigation.

Hepatitis B Immunisation As A Control Measure

Control of biological agents (which includes Hepatitis B, Tetanus, etc.) is addressed by the Biological Agents Approved Code of Practice contained in the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH).

The category of exposure to biological agents such as Hepatitis B, tetanus, etc. that will primarily impact on the National Ice Centre is: 'Exposure which does not arise out of the work activity itself, but is incidental to it; the activity does not involve direct work with or the use of the agent itself.'

The use of vaccines for employees who are exposed, or who are liable to be exposed to the Hepatitis B virus in a way where it is likely to lead to infection should consider immunisation as a potential disease control measure.

Before reliance on both immunisation and the use of Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, overalls, etc.), all other safe systems of work and management control measures must be considered.

Immunisation is just above Personal Protective Equipment in the 'hierarchy of controls' but both must be regarded as a last resort when a risk cannot be adequately controlled by other means which are equally or more effective.

Essentially immunisation is only a control measure when somebody has suffered a needlestick injury.



Immunisation **must** not be considered as the only control measure to prevent infection.

Safe systems of work (including avoiding or managing certain activities, the use of Personal Protective Equipment, provision of sharps boxes, etc.) must be implemented as there are many variants of the Hepatitis virus and other diseases that could occur in the event of a needlestick injury.

To identify those occupations/groups of workers where Hepatitis B immunisation due to the risk of exposure within the work environment may need to be offered, a risk assessment should be completed.

To assist management in this, a specific assessment template on Hepatitis B has been developed.

Other biological agents such as tetanus will be dealt with by emergency department of the nearest hospital or your own General Practitioner.

For further information on the availability and suitability of Hepatitis B immunisation please contact management.

Further Information and References

The following information and reference material is in place to assist managers to understand their responsibilities and duties.

NIC Documentation and Links

- Needles (Exposure to) Assessment form

External References

- HSIS 7 – 'Health & Safety (Sharp Instruments in Healthcare)' (HSE)
- Sharps Safety – (RCN)