



October 2018 TOPIC # 9 – Various states clinical waste definitions.

While the new Australian Standards 3816 (AS) on clinical waste is in draft and due out any moment, it's worth looking at the current various states' definitions to ensure your compliance until this is adopted (however, if your state maintains a more onerous definition then you must comply with that and there may be a penalty for any breach). Please note that the draft AS definition appears to include all visible blood which is the status quo for Vic & NSW according to their current EPA definitions. The RACGP standards include expressible blood only if your state/territory has no definition. The reasons for differing definition are often based on factors relevant to that state e.g. access to waste treatment points, cost of air transport, storing waste frozen for sometimes months. The definition centres around

- duty of care to waste handlers
- increased risk of infection from bulked waste from multiple patients
- broken bags and other containers exposing handlers unnecessarily if incorrectly segregated

Victorian EPA Reference in this document to 'contaminated with blood' refers to any contamination and not just free flowing or expressible blood. Includes urine or faeces, or materials or equipment containing urine or faeces, where there is visible blood. Includes vaginal secretions and waste from patients known to have or suspected of having a communicable disease e.g. faeces from suspect gastro. The items that translate from this definition for GP include:

- all visible blood
- genital fluids e.g. pap smear equipment contaminated with vaginal secretions
- exudates e.g. wound dressings with material on them.
- Items from pts suspect of having communicable diseases e.g. tongue depressors when pt. has sore throat

Vic EPA also include items that may cause public offence e.g. vomit bags and faeces.

NSW EPA also defines any visible blood and any waste from medical premises etc that can cause injury, infection or offence so that could reasonably include vomit, contaminated dressings and vaginal specula etc.

WA definition – the state publication quotes a now defunct government publication that referred to free flowing or expressible blood (withdrawn 20 years ago) but also includes waste that may cause infection, offence or injury.

Queensland Definition

Wastes categorised as human tissue waste include discarded waste human blood/plasma/serum, containers of free-flowing blood or blood components, or discarded material heavily contaminated with blood whether free-flowing or dried. Human body fluids such as saliva, mucus and any other fluid visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids generated with potential for infectious agents. Urine, faeces & vomit not usually included unless visibly contaminated with blood. Slightly contaminated with dried blood is not considered clinical waste e.g. spot of blood on cotton wool.

Tasmania from 2007 (unable to locate a more recent definition)

'Clinical Waste' which includes: • Pathology and sampling waste directly involved in laboratory testing; • Human anatomical waste; • Blood and body fluids and materials or equipment containing human blood or body fluids
Then under AMM requirements 3.1.3 Blood and Body Fluids. 4 i. Bulk blood, body fluids (such as 24-hour urine collections) and liquids visibly contaminated with blood, and other body fluids must not be disposed of to landfill.

South Australia – I am finding it difficult to come up with anything beyond a generic definition i.e. body fluids or materials etc that may pose a risk to health

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