

NAVAL HOSPITAL, CAMP PENDLETON STANDARDIZES SHARPS CONTAINERS

A Bloodborne Pathogens Program is required at work places where employees may be exposed to infectious materials, also known as pathogens. The Navy's Bloodborne Pathogens Program protects Navy health care personnel who work directly with patients as well as custodial and other staff members who work in hospitals and clinics. The Program protects workers from contracting infectious diseases, such as the HIV virus, hepatitis, and other diseases that may be spread through contact with blood or other body fluids.

One important aspect of an effective Bloodborne Pathogens Program is the use of *sharps containers* into which hypodermic needles, scalpel blades, and other sharp instruments are placed for disposal after contact



with patients or their bodily fluids. Sharps containers are specially designed and prominently labeled as containers of infectious medical waste. Sharps containers are designed so that they cannot be opened without destroying the entire

container. This prevents deliberate or accidental contact with, or reuse of their contents. Navy policy states that sharps containers must meet National Institute for Occupational Safety and

Health (NIOSH) guidelines. In addition, the brackets that hold the containers in place must be installed according to NIOSH guidelines.

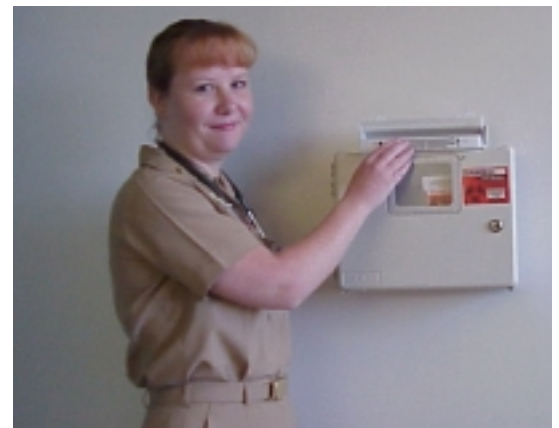


Recently, Naval Hospital, Camp Pendleton replaced all of its sharps containers in order to standardize the containers throughout the command.



Standardization helps to ensure that all staff members are familiar with how the containers work, that sharps containers have the latest safety features, and that all of the containers fit securely into the specially mounted wall and floor brackets that hold them in place.

Using NIOSH guidelines, two new sharps containers were selected. The floor-mounted model features reusable self-closing mechanisms that ensure the container is always closed when not in use. The wall-mounted model features a key locking system, a self-closing lid, and a larger opening for needle disposal. All mounting brackets for the new



containers were also standardized throughout the command and were installed according to NIOSH guidelines.

These simple changes have increased protection of the Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton staff from possible exposure to medical waste contaminated with bloodborne pathogens.

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