



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY™

Operating Policy and Procedure

OP 60.10: Use and Disposal of Sharp Objects

DATE: April 27, 2023

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Operating Policy/Procedure (OP) is to establish uniform procedures for the safe use and disposal of sharp objects at Texas Tech University.

REVIEW: This OP will be reviewed in September of every fourth year by the Assistant Vice President for Environmental Health & Safety and the Associate Vice President for Research (Research Integrity) with substantive revisions submitted to the Vice President for Research & Innovation.

POLICY/PROCEDURE

1. Definitions

- a. Sharp Objects – (commonly referred to as “sharps”) for the purpose of this OP, shall be defined as:
 - (1) Razor blades;
 - (2) X-Acto knives and blades;
 - (3) Scalpels;
 - (4) Knives;
 - (5) Hypodermic needles and hypodermic syringes with attached needles;
 - (6) Any other material or object that is readily capable of puncturing, cutting, or abrading the skin.
- b. Glass waste
 - (1) Pasteur pipettes;
 - (2) Capillary tubes;
 - (3) Broken glass.
- c. Steam Sterilization – The act of autoclaving at a temperature of at least 121°C (250°F) and a pressure of at least 15 pounds per square inch for 15–20 minutes.

- d. Chemical Disinfection – Use of chlorine bleach or other approved disinfectant/sanitizer to significantly reduce microbial activity.
- e. Thermal Inactivation – The act of submitting to dry heat of at least 160°C (320°F) under atmospheric pressure for at least two hours.

2. Applications

- a. This OP applies to the following facilities including, but not limited to:
 - (1) Teaching laboratories;
 - (2) Research laboratories;
 - (3) Animal surgery rooms;
 - (4) Farm operations;
 - (5) Field operations;
 - (6) Livestock research/growing areas;
 - (7) Support shops to laboratories; or
 - (8) Any area where sharps may be used.
- b. Disposal of Sharps
 - (1) All sharps are to be placed in a puncture-resistant sharps container.
 - (2) Puncture-resistant sharps containers are available at the Texas Tech University Central Warehouse. The containers may also be purchased through any scientific supply catalog.
 - (3) Once the sharps container is filled, fill out a *Request for Transfer of Biowaste* form from the Environmental Health & Safety website for pickup and disposal. Do not place sharps containers in the general trash receptacles or in the dumpsters.
 - (4) Refer to the attachment for proper handling and disposal of used hypodermic needles.
 - (5) Whenever possible, the use of sharps should be kept to a minimum.
- c. Disposal of Glass waste
 - (1) Glass articles such as bottles, beakers, and test tubes are potential sharps. Care should be taken not to break these items when they are discarded. Glass waste that is empty shall be placed into the broken glass waste container or into a sturdy cardboard box that can and shall be sealed prior to disposal in the dumpster.

- (2) Glass waste that contains samples shall have the samples removed and the container shall be rinsed with the sample, with the rinse then placed into the appropriate waste stream.
- (3) Broken glass waste that has samples or reactive chemicals on them shall be rinsed prior to placing the broken glass waste in the broken glass waste container, and the rinse shall be placed into the appropriate waste stream.

3. General Provisions

Whenever possible, each department will review the use of sharps in its operation with the goal of reducing the use of sharps and providing for their safe disposal. When the use of sharps is absolutely necessary, the following precautions must be followed:

- a. When appropriate, eye protection must be worn at all times while sharp objects are employed in a particular task.
- b. Sharps must be discarded in a puncture-resistant container (see section 2.b.(1) and (2)). This container must be clearly labeled.
- c. Glass articles that are accidentally broken while in use must be handled with care. If they contain a potential hazard, call Environmental Health & Safety, 806.742.3876, for advice. If they contain biological material, they must be autoclaved or chemically disinfected prior to disposal. If they are empty, sweep the sharps into a dustpan and place the pieces into the broken glass waste containers or into a sturdy cardboard box that can and shall be sealed prior to disposal in the dumpster.

4. Accident Reporting

Should a faculty member, staff, student, or visitor sustain an injury caused by a sharp object, that individual should report the accident to the person responsible for supervising her/his work as soon as possible. If necessary, the injured person should obtain medical treatment. Students may be treated at the Student Wellness Center.

An accident report must be completed and returned to Environmental Health & Safety, MS 1090, within 24 hours of the incident. If injured at a field location and treatment is required, the individual should report to the nearest medical facility. The accident report should be submitted to Environmental Health & Safety as soon as possible.

5. Compliance of Guidelines

Faculty and staff members are responsible for ensuring that those under their direction are apprised of this policy. Employees or students who willfully violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.