



Reusable Sharps Containers – Suggested Environmental Considerations and RFP Questions

Environmental Impact

- Reduces the need to manufacture new containers (reuses containers many times versus one-time with disposables)
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) associated with transportation, manufacturing, and packaging of new containers
- Reduces greenhouse gas emissions associated with reduced use of plastic and cardboard (one service can calculate carbon emissions for you)
- Eliminates packaging when reusable carts are employed
- Reduces medical waste by 3.5 tons/100 beds (or 10.5 tons/300 beds)
- Reduces cardboard waste (1 ton/300 beds)

Cost Benefit

Reusable sharps container companies have indicated a guaranteed percentage of cost savings based on reducing costs in the following areas¹

- reduced needle stick injury costs
- reduced medical waste disposal cost
- reduced costs associated with handling containers

Cost reductions vary by hospital needs/size

Environmental Metric

- Reduces medical waste by 3.5 tons/100 beds (or 10.5 tons/300 beds)²
- Reduces cardboard waste (1 ton/300 beds)
- Reduces carbon footprint by reusing plastic and avoiding cardboard waste

Case Studies

- Sharps injury reduction measured at 8 hospitals averaged 33% (Journal of Hospital Infection, July, 2003)

¹ Cost reductions vary by hospital needs/size

² Information supplied by the Daniels Company



Suggested Supplier Questions for Reusable Sharps Containers

Question	Type of Answer	Preferred Answer	Rationale
Do all reusable sharps containers meet container performance requirements outlined in OSHA's Bloodborne Pathogen Standard 1910.1030?	Yes/No	Yes	OSHA regulation
Do all reusable sharps containers meet the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Standard (21 CFR 860.3) for medical device classification?	Yes/No	Yes	FDA regulation, http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfcfr/CFRSearch.cfm?r=860.3
Are all reusable sharps containers leak proof from all sides as required by OSHA and DOT?	Yes/No	Yes	OSHA regulation; DOT (CFR 49 173.24(b)(1)) requires no contaminants be released.
Can you provide a 510K document demonstrating approval by the FDA for your reusable sharps containers and the number of uses?	Yes/No	Yes	FDA regulation
Do all of your reusable sharps containers have a mechanism to address overflow protection (preferably auto-lock when container is full)?	Yes/No	Yes	OSHA requires containers not be allowed to overflow.
Do all reusable sharps containers have visible contents level and fill line?	Yes/No	Yes	NIOSH Sharps Container Guidelines
Do all reusable sharps containers have a puncture resistant force of no less than 2.8 lbf?			ASTM F-2132-01. Puncture Resistance of Sharps Containers
Do all reusable sharp containers have a closure system providing a safe mechanism without risk of rebound of sharps?	Yes/No	Yes	This reduces needle stick injuries
Are all reusable sharps containers tamper proof?	Yes/No	Yes	This reduces needle stick injuries
Do you offer a full range of reusable sharps container sizes (such as a 2 gallon, 3 or 4, 8 and 16 gallon)?	Yes/No	Yes	A full range of sizes can meet the various needs of all types of facilities
Do you provide in-servicing for the new system?	Yes/No	Depends on need	
Can you provide clinical evidence on the kill rates demonstrating proper sanitizing?	Yes/No	Yes	This insures no harmful bacteria returns in cleaned containers to health care facilities
Are reusable carts used to transport containers to avoid excessive packaging?	Yes/No	Yes	This will reduce packaging and associated waste costs.

Does your company have an active program to reduce waste, both in company offices or facilities and for on-site services?	Yes/No	Yes	Demonstrates corporate environmental responsibility
Can you provide periodic reports on waste diverted from health care facilities served based on reusable sharps containers used?	Yes/No	Yes	Report on waste diversion can demonstrate cost savings
How many incidences of noncompliance with state, federal, or local environmental, health or safety laws and regulations that have taken place during the past 5 years, including those that were satisfactorily settled, those that resulted in no fines or legal action, and any other noncompliance incidences?	Numeric	Zero	Be sure to investigate any vendor compliance issues.
Do you use any alternatively fueled vehicles, such as hybrid trucks?	Yes/No	Yes	Demonstrates corporate environmental responsibility
Vendors awarded this contract may be required to become a Partner in EPA's SmartWay Transport Partnership once the contract is awarded to them, unless they are ineligible to become SmartWay Transport Partners. Are you already a SmartWay Partner?	Yes/No/NA	Yes when applicable	EPA's SmartWay program supports partner efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from fuel use

Practice Greenhealth © 2013

Practice Greenhealth thanks its EPP Supporters for their contributions to the creation of this resource.

