

Sharps Containers – Convert from disposable to reusable

Environmental and Human Health Impact: Eliminate 300 tons* of plastic waste from the landfill and incineration disposal

Business Impact: \$2.3M (47%) annual savings delivered upon conversion completion in Q1 2011 from disposable, single-use to reusable sharps containers

Challenge

Kaiser Permanente uses over 300 tons of “sharps” waste containers, to dispose of sharp medical instruments each year. The disposal of this medical waste is highly regulated and any changes to the disposal system are closely examined and assessed. We predominantly use single-use, sharps disposal container systems. In 2007, our Vacaville facility piloted a reusable system that proved to be cost effective, efficient and safe. If the lessons from the pilot were built upon throughout relevant Kaiser Permanente facilities, 300 tons of waste and associated disposal costs could be completely eliminated.

Aim/Goal

- Reduce cost and waste associated with the purchase and disposal of sharps containers
- Continue rigorous adherence to sharps safety and infection control risk-minimization standards

Team

- EVS Core Group (Chairs: Paul Asman, Lori Quiroz)
- Infection Control, Environmental Health & Safety
- EVS Managers & Shawn Roe (Vacaville/Vallejo EVS)
- National Sharps Safety Committee (Chairs: Vanda Puhlovich, Ellie Hendershot)
- Regional Operational Support Leaders
- Emmanuel Lawrence, Sourcing Mgr, Procurement & Supply
- Broadlane

Actions Taken

- ✓ Reusable sharps system were evaluated with frontline user input and against infection control standards
- ✓ Representatives from National Sharps Safety Committee and Infection Control visited the vendor’s facility to observe sharps waste processing and disinfection practices
- ✓ EVS managers were consulted to determine if new material management process could be accommodated within KP facilities.

- ✓ Supplier provided summary of waste avoidance associated with eliminating use of disposal containers.
- * Stericycle data
- ✓ Stericycle was selected as the single source service supplier, meeting all business requirements
- ✓ Reusable containers are durable, tamper-proof, and can withstand 500 uses before retirement
- ✓ At full implementation, over 300 tons* of single-use sharps containers will be diverted from landfill and incineration annually
- ✓ Forecasted cost savings of **\$1.75M (47%)** upon conversion of 19 locations in 2010 and **\$500K (47%)** upon conversion of 5 additional locations in Q1 2011



Lessons Learned

- ✓ When embarking on a change in procedure of medical waste handling and it is critical to engage all the different stakeholder groups to obtain input, approval and support of final decisions.

Next Steps

- ✓ Q1 2010 launch pilot in four facilities (San Diego, Panorama City, Vallejo, Sacramento)
- ✓ Based on a successful pilot outcome as determined by National Sharps Safety and sites readiness, continue conversion across an additional 15 facilities by Q3 2010
- ✓ By Q1 2011, convert another 5 facilities
- ✓ In 2011, will consider deployment in remaining facilities outside of California