Proper Disposal of Sharps at Animal Facilities

Recently, several accidental needlestick exposures caused by improper sharps disposal have been reported at UCSF animal facilities (LARC). Sharps waste including individual needles and needles attached to unmarked syringes have been found in regular trash bins or red biohazardous waste bags. When LARC staff picked up these bags as part of routine disposal procedures, they received needlestick exposures to unknown and potentially hazardous materials. In each case, risk assessment of exposure or specific prophylaxis could not be provided to LARC employees as the material contained in the needles or syringes could not be identified. This unsafe behavior creates an unacceptable and unnecessary risk for LARC and all other UCSF employees and must be corrected immediately.

According to the UCSF Proper Handling and Disposal Procedures for Sharps, all used and unused sharps (including needles, syringes, razors, scalpels, knives, Pasteur pipettes, or any other object with a sharp edge) MUST be disposed of in approved sharps waste containers ONLY. Sharps containers must be rigid, puncture-proof, and have lids that seal securely. Do not fill sharps containers beyond the designated fill line (approximately 3/4 full). When the fill line is reached, the container must be closed and replaced with a new container. If you need a sharps container in your animal housing or procedure room, please contact the LARC supervisor immediately.

It is vitally important that UCSF employees strictly follow these policies at all times so that needlestick exposures can be prevented.

Contact the UCSF Biosafety Officer at 514-2824 if you have any questions or require additional assistance.

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