

2000-2001 GRAND JURY REPORT

Medical Waste

Background

A Medical Waste Management Program in accordance with the Medical Waste Management Act, as found in the California Health and Safety Code, establishes requirements for management of medical waste. Riverside County Department of Environmental Health is responsible for permitting and administering a program to monitor where medical waste is generated, stored, transported, disposed, and treated. There are twelve Riverside County Public Health Clinics that are classified as small generators (20 lbs. or less) of medical waste. The focus of this report is regulating the handling, storage, and transporting of medical waste in the Riverside County Health Clinics.

Findings

1. Some biohazardous waste containers are not properly marked with “Bio hazardous” labels as required by the California Health and Safety Code.
2. Central holding areas for medical waste are in areas that contain other supplies and materials.
3. Individual training records are not maintained to indicate the qualifications of each employee.
4. Pickup for disposal of medical waste is by county courier delivering supplies and mail in the same van. The biohazardous waste container is fastened to the van wall by one elastic bungee cord. According to the Code, a courier can transport only 20 pounds of biohazard waste per trip.
5. The Building Service Department is responsible for service and maintenance of all clinics with the exception of Isolation Rooms.
6. Isolation room maintenance and certification are under contract to private vendors. The reports do not provide sufficient data to the Public Health Administrator to confirm certification.
7. Handling of medical waste and processing of airflow in isolation areas varies from clinic to clinic.

Recommendations

Riverside County Board of Supervisors
Department of Environmental Health
Department of Public Health

1. Label all containers (per Section 118280 of the California Health and Safety Code) with the international Biohazardous markings on the container lid and sides to be visible from any lateral direction.
2. Storage of medical waste should be in an isolated and locked area.
3. Must maintain individual training records on file at each County Health Clinic.
4. Secure the medical waste container in the transport vehicle in a manner to prevent spillage in the event of an accident.
5. The private contractor reports should be reviewed by the Public Health Administrator and also by the Building Service Department, as to the accuracy of the technical data, and to periodically verify data with on site inspections.
6. Compliance with all Medical Waste Regulations should be uniform in each of the twelve County Health Clinics.