

FAQ on handling and containing biohazardous waste

Biohazardous waste need to be correctly contained with minimal manual handling. Here are some frequently asked questions for generators based on the **Industry Code of Practice for Managing Biohazardous Waste (Including Clinical and Related Wastes)**, also known as the Biohazardous Waste Industry Code or BWI Code.

These FAQs give general guidance only. Biohazardous waste management is highly regulated with many measures required under law. Refer to the BWI Code and relevant regulations in your jurisdiction to understand both mandatory and recommended obligations.

Q1. What are the guidelines for handling biohazardous waste?

Waste generators, transporters and treatment/disposal companies all have specific responsibilities when it comes to training staff and creating a safe working environment to minimise risks from handling biohazardous waste.

Look for ways to minimise human contact with biohazardous waste at every point between source and disposal. Safe handling starts with controlling risks at the point of generation by correctly segregating, containing and labelling all waste at source.

At a high level, safe handling techniques cover:

- minimising human contact with waste
- setting up simple standard procedures
- using safe transport techniques
- training staff and providing suitable protection
- cleaning containers before return.

Refer to the BWI Code for more information.

Q2. How do I train staff to handle waste safely?

Staff must be trained in safe handling techniques, such as avoiding doubling handling of waste, managing spills and not manually compacting waste. Employees must wear the appropriate personal protective equipment and know how to use it correctly. The BWI Code lists the numerous safe work practices in sections 6, 12 and 13.

Q3. Who is responsible for correctly packaging wastes?

The generator is responsible for correctly packaging wastes. The waste transporter is responsible for advising the generator of any problems related to incorrect waste packaging.

WMRR NATIONAL OFFICE
57 ST JOHNS ROAD
GLEBE NSW 2037

(02) 8746 5000
INFO@WMRR.ASN.AU

WMRR.ASN.AU

Q4. What containers do I need to use for biohazardous waste?

Generators must secure and place all solid waste and sharps generated in their premises in clearly labelled containers/liners that meet the requirements specified in Australian and New Zealand Standards, dangerous goods codes and/or by any regulatory authority (where applicable), for each type of biohazardous waste generated.

Biohazardous waste containers are specially designed with specific colours and labels depending on the type of waste being contained. Containers must be labelled with the correct wording and symbols to clearly show the contents of the container. Australia and New Zealand have different container and labelling requirements (see below).

Q5. How do I contain biohazardous waste in Australia?

Waste type	Container colour	Liner colour	Marking – words	Marking – symbols	
Biohazardous waste that must be incinerated	Yellow body and orange lid	Orange	'Biohazardous Waste' clearly displayed in black with any other wording that complies with local regulations	International biohazard symbol in black	
Biohazardous waste that can be treated by incineration and/or other technologies	Yellow body and yellow lid	Yellow			
Cytotoxic waste (must be incinerated)	Purple body and lid	Purple	'Cytotoxic Waste' clearly displayed.	Telophase symbol in white	

Q6. How do I contain biohazardous waste in New Zealand?

Waste type	Container colour	Marking for internal facility use	Transport label
Infectious	Yellow		
Cytotoxic	Purple		
All other waste	Not specified	As specified by relevant regulations	As specified in NZS 5433: Transport of dangerous goods on land

Q7. How do I contain sharps?

Generators must use sharps containers that, as a minimum, meet all the requirements specified by AS/NZS 4261 for reusable sharps containers or AS 4031 for non-reusable sharps containers, or a standard approved by the relevant regulatory authority.

Q8. How should waste transport companies manage sharps?

Waste transport companies who supply, collect, service for reuse, or dispose of sharps containers are responsible for implementing workplace health and safety practices that will minimise the risk of injury to their employees. This responsibility applies during handling, transporting and disposing of full containers or their contents (in the case of reusable containers). Safe practices also extend to cleaning and maintaining reusable containers. Waste transport companies should be aware of the requirements for containers used to transport sharp medical items in AS/NZS 4261 and AS 4031.

About the BWI Code

The BWI Code helps anyone working with biohazardous waste to understand their responsibilities and work towards environmental best practice in the safe and cost-effective handling, transport, treatment and disposal of biohazardous waste across Australia and New Zealand.

The BWI Code is published by the Biohazard Waste Industry division under the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) – the only national peak body for the \$15 bn waste and resource recovery industry.

To purchase the Code, email the WMRR national office at info@wmrr.asn.au

WMRR NATIONAL OFFICE
57 ST JOHNS ROAD
GLEBE NSW 2037

(02) 8746 5000
INFO@WMRR.ASN.AU

WMRR.ASN.AU