

FAQ on waste management plans and audits

Here are some frequently asked questions on waste management plans and audits for biohazardous waste based on the **Industry Code of Practice for Managing Biohazardous Waste (Including Clinical and Related Wastes)**, also known as the Biohazardous Waste Industry Code (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 is a waste management plan?

A waste management plan documents how you will collect, treat and dispose of biohazardous waste in a way that mitigates risks to human health and the environment and in compliance with regulations.

The extent and content of the plan will depend on the types and quantities of biohazardous waste generated and the services available to manage those wastes on/offsite.

Q2. Why do I need a waste management plan?

A waste management plan is part of a best practice approach to waste management. Most generators and all waste management companies are required to have a waste management plan by law (different regulations apply to waste generators in different jurisdictions).

BWI recommends that all generators have a waste management plan. It doesn't need to be overly onerous if you are only generating small amounts of waste – it simply documents your processes so you can be sure that you are meeting all relevant regulations.

Q3. What's in a waste management plan?

As well as any regulatory requirements, waste management plans should set out how to:

- ensure compliant waste segregation, storage and packaging for collection
- measure waste segregation performance, for example using waste audits
- manage all waste streams generated at the facility, not just biohazardous wastes
- deal with situations that create short-term abnormal waste volumes (where appropriate), such as multiple cases, emergencies or natural disasters
- consider waste avoidance and minimisation measures based on the waste management hierarchy.

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For more information see Appendix 5 in the BWI Code, which lists recommended contents for a waste management plan.

The waste management plan should be developed after completing a waste audit so that you have a snapshot of all the activities at your facility and where improvements can be made.

The plan should also be based on consultation with all stakeholders.

Q4. Why do I need to audit my facility?

Regular waste audits help ensure that staff are following the correct procedures and all waste is being managed safely.

Waste audits can also be used to help identify appropriate wastes for effective and efficient reuse, recycling or disposal.

All generators should use waste audits to confirm that biohazardous waste is correctly segregated and to encourage waste minimisation practices.

Q5. How often should I audit my facility?

Waste audits should be conducted before developing or updating a waste management plan, and at intervals as reasonably required to ensure compliance based on waste segregation performances in previous audits.

Waste audits should be conducted randomly to check that the generator is only sending waste acceptable for a specified type of treatment/disposal, and that biohazardous wastes are not being disposed of via the general waste stream. Waste generators should be involved in planning and conducting these waste audits.

Q6. Who can do an audit?

Due to the inherent risks, anyone carrying out waste audits must be appropriately trained in safe auditing techniques and have all necessary vaccinations.

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 (BWI) 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

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