

Waste hazards around your business

Needles and BBP

For those cleaning up waste sites, there's more to fear from used needles than a puncture wound—there's also the potential for infection from a number of bloodborne pathogens (BBP). As noted in the checklist, be sure to train employees on this potential hazard. Training guidance can be found on Oregon OSHA's bloodborne pathogens page (bit.ly/3Spbm0G).

Business owners, employees, and consumers alike can be exposed to waste that is left behind by people who are unhoused or have other challenges with disposing of their personal waste. Below is a checklist to ensure employers and employees are aware of the hazards they face when handling and disposing waste and how to protect themselves during these tasks.

Before you clean, determine if the material is on business property, and then contact your local agencies.

- Law enforcement** | For trespassing, paraphernalia, and prescription disposal. Use the police nonemergency number, unless the situation requires 911 response.
- Behavioral health/public service agency** | Discuss the issue, concerns, and your cleanup project.
- Landlord** | If you rent or lease, review your contract to determine who is legally responsible for the cleanup and removal of waste.
- Health department** | For advice on proper cleaning, sanitization, and disinfectant information regarding communicable and infectious diseases, contact your local health department. Health departments and some pharmacies offer sharps disposal and container exchange programs.

- Local disposal/landfill** | For information on how materials should be collected/contained before delivery to disposal services, dumpsters, or the local landfill

Prehire/prior to start

- Bloodborne pathogen training
- Fitted for PPE
- Vaccination recommendations for workers should be developed in consultation with local health authorities.
- Fentanyl awareness training (saif.adobeconnect.com/p0gu576moiwa)

Hazards

- Heavy lifting, prolonged standing, and regular bending
- Bloodborne pathogens, including body fluids or other infectious agents
- High-pressure water
- Chemical hazards and toxic substances



Exposures/potential conditions

- Psychosocial stress
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Infectious diseases (Hepatitis)
- Dermatologic diseases (Scabies, bed bugs)
- Respiratory diseases
- High-pressure injection injury
- Fentanyl exposure

General work environment

- Bathrooms
- Parking lots

Personal protective equipment (PPE)

- Eye protection** | Provide goggles or face shields and wear them if there is any danger of flying particles or corrosive materials.
- Hand protection** | Provide gloves to guard against cuts, corrosive liquids, bloodborne pathogens, body fluids, fentanyl exposure, and chemicals.
- Body protection** | Provide aprons and decontamination suits, including hood/head coverings, where there is any danger of flying particles, corrosive materials, bloodborne pathogens, body fluids, and chemicals.
- Foot protection** | Provide puncture-resistant, rubber, and/or nonabsorbent slip-resistant shoes where there is any task in relation to high-pressure washing of hot, corrosive, poisonous/paraphernalia substances, chemicals, bloodborne pathogens, or any other body fluid.

- Respirators** | Provide them where there is any exposure of fecal particles. When fecal matter dries, some particles become airborne and can spread viruses such as rotavirus. You may also want to provide them in the presence of drug paraphernalia to prevent accidental inhalation.

Special note | Maintain all protective equipment in a sanitary condition and ready for use.

Eyewash facilities | Limit injury severity from potentially harmful chemical exposure by installing and maintaining eyewash or shower stations.

Equipment for the job

- **Sharps containers** are best used to dispose of found hypodermic needles and other paraphernalia.
- **Wheelbarrows or carts** can be used for transporting waste such as left-behind clothing, bedding, housing materials, waste, and other garbage to the dumpster.
- **Snow shovels** are a quick and easy way to pick up the left-behind materials needing to be loaded into the cart and disposed of.
- **Power washers** can be used for the final step of washing away any leftover particles and debris, and assist with the sanitation process.



For more information, please visit:

- “Guidance for Reducing Health Risks to Workers Handling Human Waste or Sewage” (bit.ly/4bgRi9t)
- Janitorial safety training program (California Dept. of Industrial Relations) (bit.ly/30sadV4)
- “What to Do with Used Sharps in Oregon” (bit.ly/35FxB3S)
- Sharps or medical waste | Information about safe storage and disposal, and sharps container exchange (bit.ly/3SI41ed)
- Oregon Health Authority FAQs about infectious waste (bit.ly/3HIDGX8)