

Home Generated Sharps Waste Stewardship Plans

Improperly managed home-generated sharps waste presents significant public health, safety, and environmental problems at the end of their useful lives. Unsafe sharps disposal can impact janitorial and housekeeping workers, sanitation workers, and children or household pets, among others. A single needlestick injury can mean weeks of taking medications to prevent the spread of infection, as well as months waiting for tests for life-threatening conditions such as HIV/AIDs or Hepatitis B or C.

SB 212 Solid waste: pharmaceutical and sharps waste stewardship was approved by the Governor in 2018 and added sections to Public Resources Code to establish the Pharmaceutical and Sharps Waste Stewardship Program, which requires safe and convenient disposal options for pharmaceutical drugs and home-generated sharps waste.

CalRecycle is the lead state oversight department for this law and the California State Board of Pharmacy also has oversight of specific provisions. On January 7, 2021, the Office of Administrative Law approved the Pharmaceutical and Sharps Waste Stewardship Regulations. CalRecycle expects implementation of the first statewide home-generated sharps take-back programs to begin in early 2022 and anticipates full implementation by late 2022.

SB 212 and the regulations require a covered entity, or a stewardship organization established on behalf of a group of covered entities, to develop and implement a stewardship program for pharmaceuticals and/or for home-generated sharps and submit the stewardship plan to CalRecycle. A pharmaceutical waste or home-generated sharps stewardship plan outlines how a program operator intends to fulfill its responsibilities under the statute and regulations and communicates a course of action to stakeholders and the public. The program operator shall submit its proposed stewardship plan to the California State Board of Pharmacy for review, and to any other applicable state agencies with areas of authority relative to the stewardship plan, before submitting the plan to CalRecycle. CalRecycle has until December 13, 2021, to complete its compliance review and approve, conditionally approve, or disapprove the plans. Covered entities must be subject to an approved stewardship plan by January 7, 2022.

UltiMed, Inc. (UltiMed), a covered entity/ program operator, and Med-Project, a stewardship organization representing 73 covered entities that supply sharps, both have prepared home generated sharp waste stewardship plans with comprehensive Mail-Back and education and outreach program consistent with the adopted regulations. Direct users of sharps, medical prescribers of sharps, and pharmacies can comply with UltiMed's and Med-Project's Mail-Back processes to safely and securely collect, track, and properly manage home-generated sharps waste. In addition, both stewardship plans outline their processes to reimburse local jurisdictions for transportation and disposal costs related to home generated sharps waste collected at local household hazardous waste (HHW) facilities.

CalRecycle gave the public the opportunity to comment on UltiMed's stewardship plan. The public comment period ended on October 25, 2021. The Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/Integrated Waste Management Task Force strongly supports extended producer responsibility programs especially those that support local jurisdictions' efforts in managing and properly disposing of sharp and other pharmaceutical wastes. The Task Force sent a comment letter to CalRecycle with recommendations to remedy a few concerns with UltiMed's stewardship plan. The Task Force's comments sent to CalRecycle can be viewed at <https://dpw.lacounty.gov/epd/tf/Corresp.cfm>.

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