



Health & Community Services

# San Juan County

P.O. Box 607 ♦ 145 Rhone, Friday Harbor, WA 98250  
Phone: (360) 378-4474 Fax: (360) 378-7036

## RESIDENTIAL SHARPS (NEEDLES / SYRINGES) DISPOSAL

When disposed of improperly, discarded sharps pose a health risk to the public; particularly, to solid waste workers who may suffer a needle stick injury. Needle stick injuries increase the risk of exposure to infectious blood-borne diseases such as Hepatitis B & C, and HIV from contaminated needles and may require expensive testing.

San Juan County Code 8.14.030 (J) allows the disposal of residential sharps into household garbage cans when the sharps are properly packaged and labeled. Residential sharps are hypodermic needles, syringes with needles attached, scalpel blades, and lancets that are generated from self-treatment.

To minimize the risk of a needle stick injury, follow one of the recommendations for the proper disposal of residential sharps below:

1. Mail-away disposal - FDA approved sharps containers can be purchased from medical waste disposal companies, and shipped to your home. When you purchase the container you are also paying for the disposal of the container when you are ready to send it back. Simply fill the sharps container and mail it back in the box provided.
2. Use a red pre-labeled plastic sharps disposal container or label an empty PET (polyethylene terephthalate) bottle using a permanent marker with the warning: **DO NOT RECYCLE: CONTAINS USED SYRINGES**. Place used syringes in the container or bottle. When the container or bottle is full, place the cap on and seal it with tape. Dispose of the filled, sealed container or bottle in your household garbage.
  - DO NOT place the container or bottle in your recycling bin. Sharps are not recyclable.
  - DO NOT add bleach or other disinfectant to the container or bottle. This will not completely disinfect the needles and it could spill and injure you or solid waste workers.
3. Needle Clippers – A specialized product that contains the needle portion of the syringe inside the clipping device. The clipped syringe can go into your household garbage as well as the needle clipper device when it's full. Be sure to clip the entire needle portion of the syringe.

Contact Environmental Health at (360) 378-4474 for more information.

**Note: This guidance only applies to residential sharps disposal. All other biomedical waste must be disposed of through a biomedical waste collection company that provides treatment prior to disposal into the municipal solid waste stream.**