

University of Pittsburgh Safety Manual	EH&S Guideline Number: 05-008	
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SHARPS USE AND SAFETY-ENGINEERED SHARPS DEVICE INITIATIVE

A Sharp is defined as any item that can puncture human skin. Sharps include needles, scalpels, razor blades, etc. Sharps injuries may occur when using exposed needles, scalpels, or any other Sharps device. Ideally, principal investigators (PIs) should eliminate the use of needles when possible and where safe and effective alternatives are available. However, when elimination of Sharps is not feasible, engineering controls should be used to reduce Sharps injuries.

1. Unsafe work practices also contribute to Sharps injuries. All Sharps, including Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices, must be properly disposed in approved Sharps containers. Anyone using Sharps should remember the following:

- 1.1 All needles and Sharps must be discarded directly into approved Sharps containers.
- 1.2 Standard needles should not be recapped or left out in work areas; they should be used and then immediately disposed in approved Sharps containers without recapping.
- 1.3 Approved Sharps containers must be placed in all areas where Sharps may be utilized or generated.
- 1.4 Sharps containers should be disposed when they are approximately 2/3 full. (Refer to the Sharps disposal section for more information.)
- 1.5 If a Sharps injury occurs, a Sharps Injury Report form must be filled out. Refer to the Injury Treatment and Reporting for more information.

2. Use of Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices

Safety-engineered Sharps Devices are Sharps that contain engineering controls; safety features are built into the products. Safety-engineered Sharps Devices include retractable injection needles, scalpels with sliding shields, and sheathing blood collection devices. Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices should be utilized wherever possible to reduce the potential for exposure to potentially infectious materials or hazardous chemicals.

EH&S has worked with researchers to implement Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices in an effort to protect faculty, staff, and students from risks associated with exposure to potentially infectious materials or hazardous chemicals via a Sharps injury. Implementation and active evaluation of Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices is mandated for the following groups:

- 2.1 University faculty and staff that perform human subject research or have direct patient contact duties.
- 2.2 University faculty and staff that work with experimental animals at animal biosafety level 2+ (ABSL-2+) or above.

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2.3 University faculty and staff that work at ABSL-2 and for whom EH&S has determined a high risk of significant exposure to dangerous pathogens via Sharps injury.

2.4 University faculty and staff utilizing Sharps while working with non-human primates and their tissues.

2.5 University faculty and staff using Sharps with biosafety level 2 (BSL-2) agents.

PIs should select Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices by remembering the following:

- The safety feature should work effectively and reliably
- The device should be acceptable to the user
- The device should not create an additional hazard
- When applicable, the device should not adversely affect the animal

EH&S is available to assist PI's with obtaining information on and samples of Safety-Engineered Sharps Devices.

Reference: NIOSH Alert: Preventing Needlestick Injuries in Health Care Settings, NIOSH Publication No. 2000-108, <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/2000-108.html>