



Oregon
Theodore R. Kulongoski, Governor

Department of Consumer and Business Services
Oregon Occupational Safety & Health Division (OR-OSHA)
350 Winter Street NE, Room 430
P.O. Box 14480
Salem, OR 97309-0405
Phone: (503) 378-3272
Toll Free: 1-800-922-2689
Fax: (503) 947-7461
www.orosha.org

March 2, 1999

Reviewed: October 12, 2007

Karen McMullin, Laboratory Manager
Medford Clinic P.C.
555 Black Oak Dr.
Medford, OR 97504

Dear Ms. McMullin:

This letter is in response to your letter of December 31, 1998. First I would like to apologize for the overdue response to your letter. In your letter you ask for clarification of the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard (1910.1030). You ask the three following questions:

Question: Is it OK to reuse biohazard bags if there is no visible contamination?

Answer: 1910.1030(d)(2)(xiii) requires that specimens be transported in a labeled and/or color-coded container that prevents leakage. The rule also requires that the container be placed in a puncture-resistant container if the items in the first container could puncture it.

The current standard does not address reusing these containers except when one or more of the specimen containers leaks blood or other potentially infectious materials (OPIM), in which case it would either need to be decontaminated or disposed of properly. However, we suggest you contact the appropriate licensing program or laboratory standard-setting organization to ensure that reusing the bags does not pose a risk of sample cross-contamination.

Question: Do biohazard bags that are used for specimen transport need to be disposed of in biohazard trash since they have the symbol or can they go into regular trash if there is no visible contamination?

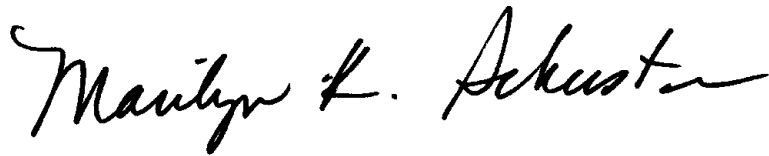
Answer: If an item is not contaminated with blood or OPIM, our standards do not address how it must be disposed. However, we suggest you contact your local DEQ solid waste office and your garbage handler to ensure that they have no requirements for disposal.

Question: Is it all right to use plain plastic bags (without the biohazard symbol) to hold lab specimens as long as they are transported in a sturdy container and the container has a biohazard symbol on it?

Answer: You may use plastic bags to contain specimens without the biohazard symbol only if it does not leave the facility and only if universal precautions are used and it is recognized as a bag that contains specimens.

If you have any questions please contact the technical section at (800)922-2689.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marilyn K. Schuster". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Marilyn K. Schuster, Manager
Standards and Technical Resources Section
Oregon Occupational Safety and Health Division