

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2401

As Reported By House Committee On:
Environmental Affairs

Title: An act relating to the containerization and source separation of residential sharps waste.

Brief Description: Disposing of residential sharps waste.

Sponsors: Representatives Linville, Horn, Rust, Quall, L. Johnson, Foreman, Wood and J. Kohl.

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Environmental Affairs, February 3, 1994, DPS.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Rust, Chair; Flemming, Vice Chair; Horn, Ranking Minority Member; Van Luven, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bray; Foreman; Holm; L. Johnson; J. Kohl; Linville; Roland and Sheahan.

Minority Report: Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Edmondson and Hansen.

Staff: Rick Anderson (786-7114).

Background: There are no state requirements for the disposal of hypodermic needles generated at a household.

Rules adopted by the Utilities and Transportation Commission require a solid waste collection company to collect hypodermic needles (sharps waste) in a leak-proof, rigid plastic container that is sealed and marked "biohazardous" or "biomedical." These rules apply only to clinics, hospitals, and other commercial facilities.

Some private solid waste collection companies currently collect sharps waste containers from households as an additional service to normal garbage collection service. Some pharmacies have developed programs to accept sharps waste if it is stored within a specified hard plastic container. Other companies allow home needle users to return sharps waste containers through the mail.

Summary of Substitute Bill: A person using a private or public collection company to dispose of sharps waste must contain the used needles in a red, sealed, leak-proof, plastic container. Containers meeting these specifications are defined as "sharps waste containers."

Beginning July 1, 1995, it is illegal to dispose of sharps waste or sharps waste containers into a solid waste container if collection service is available for sharps waste containers. It is also illegal to dispose of sharps waste or sharps waste containers into recycling receptacles regardless of service availability. Persons using mail or pharmacy return programs to dispose of sharps waste are not affected by these requirements.

Public or private companies collecting sharps waste separately from garbage must provide information to customers on the availability and cost of the service as well as options to the service.

Pharmacy return programs cannot be designated as a solid waste handling facility and do not need a permit to accept sharps waste containers. Pharmacy return programs are required to register, at no cost, with the Department of Ecology.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Garbage collection companies are required to provide information 45 days prior to providing sharps waste collection service. A provision requiring state and local agencies to provide information on sharps waste disposal is deleted. A person who intentionally and illegally disposes of sharps waste is subject to a maximum \$50 penalty; the original bill contained no penalties.

Fiscal Note: Requested January 20, 1994.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for section 3 which takes effect July 1, 1995.

Testimony For: The bill will promote worker safety for persons who collect garbage or handle recyclables. Proper disposal of sharps waste will lower costs for recycling companies by reducing the number of recyclables containing used hypodermic needles.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: John Paul Jones, Washington Refuse & Recycling Association (pro); Gordon Walgren, Washington State

Pharmacists (pro); Margaret Norton Arnold, National Association of Plastics Recovery (pro); Doris Zacher, Washington State Recycling Association (pro); Tim Sweeney, Washington Utilities & Transportation Commission (pro with concerns); and Robin Appleford, Metro King County (pro with comments).