

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6166

AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 1994

Brief Description: Disposing of residential sharps waste.

SPONSORS: Senators Fraser and Talmadge

SENATE COMMITTEE ON ECOLOGY & PARKS

Staff: Kari Guy (786-7464)

Hearing Dates: February 2, 1994

BACKGROUND:

There are currently no state requirements governing the disposal of residential sharps waste. In 1991 the Department of Ecology instituted a program to dispose of sharps in plastic, two-liter bottles, which Ecology found to be most effective in containing sharps when subjected to the physical stresses of waste disposal. An orange sticker affixed to the container reads "Warning: Syringes - Do Not Recycle." A recent survey found that approximately 25 percent of insulin users dispose of residential sharps through this method.

Eight residential waste haulers offer home syringe pickup services. These providers serve .07 percent of insulin users in Washington. Where the service is available, it is used by approximately 5 percent of insulin users.

Dropoff programs for residential sharps waste have been offered by some drug stores. A sharps container may be purchased at the drug stores, and once filled with residential sharps the container may be returned to the drug store for disposal. Containers which may be mailed to a medical incinerator site for disposal when filled are also available for purchase at some drug stores.

Waste haulers have expressed concerns that disposal of residential sharps in solid waste or recycling containers may jeopardize the health and safety of solid waste workers.

SUMMARY:

Legislative findings are made that improper disposal of sharps waste poses a potential health risk and perceived threat to waste generators, the public, and workers in the waste and recycling industry. The intent of the act is to separate sharps waste from the regular solid waste stream.

Residential generators of sharps waste are required to separate the sharps waste and place it in a sealed, leak-proof, rigid plastic container. It is illegal to dispose of

sharps waste in recycling collection containers, or solid waste collection containers without the approval of the service provider.

Solid waste collection companies may provide programs for collection of residential sharps waste. Disposal costs are to be paid by the generator.

Pharmacies providing return programs are not solid waste handling facilities, and do not need a solid waste permit, but are required to register with the Department of Ecology for public information purposes.

A solid waste planning jurisdiction may designate sharps waste container drop-off locations.

A number of state and local agencies are directed to include information on the proper handling and disposal of sharps waste to citizens when addressing solid waste issues.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 14, 1994