SAFE DISPOSAL OF HYPODERMIC NEEDLES AND SHARPS

The correct method for disposing of needles and sharps is to use a dedicated correctly labelled sharps container. The local authority will normally collect the container for a small fee or disposal can be through domestic refuse for small containers.

Although incidents of needle stick injuries within the School are very rare, it is possible, and when they do occur they can be traumatic for the individuals concerned.

Hypodermic needles can be found in a variety of places and may or may not have the syringe attached.

All sites should provide a removal pack comprising of:

- Sharps Box
- Disinfectant spray
- Protective Gloves
- Antiseptic Wipes
- Tweezers

Places where hypodermic needles may be found:

**Refuse Sacks and Litter Bins:**
Care should be taken to avoid needle sticks to the legs when moving refuse sack. There is a possibility that a needle could be sticking out of the side of the refuse sack.

**Piles of Rubbish:**
Piles of rubbish should not be scooped up with bare hands. Protective gloves should be worn and the use of a shovel or dust pan should be employed.

**Cleaning:**
When cleaning areas care should be taken not to run hands over the area without first making a visual check to see that needles are not lodged in inaccessible places.

**Toilets:**
Needles may be wedged behind sanitary fittings.

**Maintenance Contractors:**
Maintenance contractors should be made aware that if they discover a discarded hypodermic needle they should not attempt to dispose of it, they should report it to the Estates Department who will arrange for removal. Where access can only be gained by the contractor the appropriate removal pack and instruction can be provided to the contractor for removal.

When removing needles and sharps avoid contact with bare hands. Always use protective equipment such as:

- disposable tweezers or tongs
- protective gloves

A reporting system should be set up this should indicate where the needles have been found.

In the event of a needle stick injury or a cut the following first aid procedures should be carried out:

1. Encourage the wound to bleed
2. Wash well under cold running water without soap and cover with a dry dressing.
3. Seek medical advice immediately from hospital or own GP.
4. Record the incident and action taken in the accident/incident report book.

A protective injection against hepatitis B can be given, but needs to be done within 48 hours.

All occurrences of needle stick injuries should be investigated.

For further advice contact the Health and Safety Officer on ext.1424 or g.robertson@gsa.ac.uk

Further Government advice on handling needles can be found at: