

Regulated Medical Waste Management Regulations, Amendment 3

Compliance Assistance Document for Regulated Medical Waste Generators

This document provides a *high-level* overview of the [Regulated Medical Waste \(RMW\) Management Regulations \(9VAC20-121\)](#) for RMW Generators. The new regulations are effective March 15, 2023, and background information on Amendment 3 to the regulations is available on the [Virginia Regulatory Town Hall webpage](#).

Generators

A "generator" is any person or facility whose act or process produces regulated medical waste (RMW). RMW may be generated by a wide variety of entities, including but not limited to, hospitals, doctor's offices, dental offices, urgent care and other healthcare facilities, laboratories, veterinary clinics, pharmacies, ear and body piercing providers, tattoo parlors, and commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities with on-site healthcare services.

General Handling

Generators of RMW are required to:

- Identify and segregate RMW from other types of waste at the point of origin or as soon as practicable after generation. When practical, segregate RMW based on the anticipated treatment method
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment when handling or packaging RMW or loading RMW containers
- Handle RMW in a manner that maintains the integrity of the packaging at all times, prevents damage, leakage, and spills, and provides protection from the elements, vectors, and trespassers

Trash chutes cannot be used to manage RMW, and RMW should not be manually or mechanically compacted or compressed prior to treatment.

Packaging and Labeling

The generator is responsible for the packaging and labeling of all RMW onsite prior to storage, treatment, or transport.

When RMW is first discarded, it should be placed directly in bags or containers meeting the Bloodborne Pathogen Standard ([16VAC25-90-1910.1030](#), [29 CFR 1910.1030](#)). Red bags should be used to package RMW, except for sharps. Sharps must be placed directly in puncture resistant containers.

Prior to moving the bag or container, it must be closed, capped, or sealed so no waste can leak, spill, or protrude. Once closed, bags and containers should not be opened, unsealed, unpackaged, or repackaged. If damage, spills, or contamination of the packaging occurs, the bag or container should be placed in appropriate secondary packaging.



A clearly legible label must be securely attached to or printed on the packaging of each individual bag or container and should include the following information in permanent ink:

- Name, address, and business phone number of the generator
- "Regulated Medical Waste," "Biohazard," or "Infectious Waste" in large print; and
- The universal biohazard symbol.
- For hospitals, the specific department or lab where the waste originated (for environmental health and safety purposes in the event of a spill, exposure, or other emergency response)

Wheeled Carts

Wheeled carts for RMW should be:

- labeled with the universal biohazard symbol or color-coded red, and
- secured, locked, or sealed so that no waste materials can leak when not being filled and prior to moving.

Wheeled carts should not be used to hold liquids, sharps, anatomical waste, or animal carcasses unless the RMW is:

- contained in rigid containers capable of retaining liquids with enough absorbent material to absorb all liquid present, and
- separated from other types of RMW by a leak-proof rigid barrier, divider, or separate compartment.

Prior to transporting RMW offsite for treatment, transfer, or disposal, waste should be packaged and labeled for transportation per [49 CFR Part 173](#) of the [U.S. Department of Transportation Hazardous Materials Regulations](#). RMW transporters are subject to [additional requirements](#) under the RMW regulations.

Storage

RMW must be [stored](#) in a manner that maintains the integrity of the packaging at all times and:

- Keeps packages in an upright stable configuration with the top of stacked containers less than 6 ft above floor level
- Is clean and orderly and in areas free of standing liquid and debris
- Provides security from unauthorized access and protect workers and the general public
- Limits access to only those persons specifically designated to manage RMW

If Generating LESS THAN 250 GALLONS of RMW per Calendar Month

- Arrange for removal of all RMW stored onsite at least once per calendar month and provide shipment to a facility permitted to receive it for transfer, treatment, or disposal
- No RMW should be stored onsite for more than 45 calendar days
- No more than 250 gallons of RMW should be stored onsite at any time

If Generating 250 GALLONS OR MORE of RMW per Calendar Month

- Store RMW on cleanable surfaces impermeable to liquids (no carpets, cracks, or gaps, and tile seams require sealing)
- Store RMW in areas where floor drains discharge directly to an approved sanitary sewer system, and where ventilation discharges to minimize exposure to the waste
- Display signage to indicate any areas used to store RMW
- Arrange for removal of all RMW stored onsite at least once per calendar week and provide shipment to a facility permitted to receive it for transfer, treatment, or disposal
- No RMW should be stored onsite for more than 10 calendar days

Storage time limits are linked to the date waste is first placed in storage, NOT the date waste is first generated. A bag or container is not considered to be in storage while it is still being filled at the point of generation.

RMW that is stored on loading docks or in areas designated for loading should be packaged, marked, and labeled for transport and must not be stored in loading areas for more than 24 hours.

Reusable Cart and Container Cleaning

- Clean and disinfect immediately after each use
- Clean with detergent and water
- Disinfect using one of the following options:
 1. An EPA-registered general or broad-spectrum disinfectant following instructions on label
 2. Heated rinse water between 180°F and 195°F for at least 15 seconds, or until the surface temperature reaches 160°F, or
 3. Immersion in or rinsing with an [approved chemical sanitizer](#) for at least 3 minutes
- Contain and discharge all wash water directly to an approved sanitary sewer system

Spill Kits and Cleanup

- Maintain [spill kits](#) in the vicinity of all RMW management areas containing the following:
 - Material designed to absorb spilled liquids
 - EPA-registered hospital grade disinfectant effective against mycobacteria in a sprayer
 - Enough red plastic bags to double enclose at least 150% of the max load managed
 - Appropriate personal protective equipment
- Immediately address spills by repackaging RMW (placing in secondary packaging), cleaning and disinfecting the area, and replenishing the spill kit

Treatment and Disposal

RMW should not be treated (e.g., autoclaved, etc.) unless in accordance with an [RMW Treatment Facility permit](#) from the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality. RMW should either be treated in accordance with the appropriate permit, or packaged, labeled, and transported offsite by an RMW transporter to a facility permitted to receive the waste for transfer, treatment, or disposal. Untreated RMW, including its packaging, must not be used, reused, reclaimed, recycled, or disposed of in a solid waste landfill or other solid waste management facility.

Recordkeeping

The following records must be maintained at least 3 years from the record date and be available for review upon request:

- **Records of waste treated onsite**, if the generator has an [RMW Treatment Facility permit](#) from the department
- **Records of waste shipped offsite for transfer, treatment, or disposal**, including copies of all shipping papers, specifying the date of shipment, amount of waste removed from the site, and the names, addresses, and phone numbers of the transporter and destination facility receiving the shipment for treatment or disposal
- **Records of waste received from offsite**, including the date of receipt, name of each offsite generator, amount of waste received, and dates of subsequent treatment or shipment offsite. No more than 25% of the RMW should be received from offsite each month unless the generator has a [permit](#) from the department.