

Hazardous Waste in Minnesota Health Care Facilities

Many products used in a health care facility become hazardous waste when discarded. These can include batteries, cleaning chemicals, dental amalgam, disinfectants, lab reagents, paints, pharmaceuticals, and radiology chemicals. Because hazardous waste regulations are confusing and health care wastes are complicated, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has been working with hospitals since 2002 on appropriate hazardous waste management. MPCA recognizes other health care facilities such as clinics, dentists, long term care, pharmacies and veterinarians also generate hazardous waste and may not be aware the regulations apply to them. The MPCA in conjunction with the Minnesota Technical Assistance Program (MnTAP), a non-regulatory pollution prevention program at the University of Minnesota, is starting an initiative to assist these businesses with compliance and waste reduction.

The initiative will consist of a cooperative effort by the MPCA, MnTAP, and related trade associations to provide outreach to non-hospital health care facilities with:

- Non regulatory, learning site visits
- Assistance-focused fact sheets (Fall 2009)
- Learning workshops held in various locations around the state (January to June 2010)
- An on-line self-assessment (April to July 2010)

The MPCA views the initiative as an opportunity to provide assistance and allow time for non-hospital health care facilities to come into compliance with hazardous waste regulations. Following the initiative, the entire Minnesota health care industry will be subject to full enforcement of hazardous waste regulations. Metro county hazardous waste programs may already be fully regulating hazardous waste in health care facilities.

If you would like to get a head start, please contact Brandon Finke at the MPCA (651) 757-2358 or brandon.finke@state.mn.us to schedule a site visit.