

## Regulated Waste

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**Question:** What is regulated waste? Are there special requirements for regulated waste containers?

**Answer:** According to OSHA, regulated waste is defined as “liquid or semi-liquid blood or other potentially infectious materials; contaminated items that would release blood or other potentially infectious materials in a liquid or semi-liquid state if compressed; items that are caked with dried blood or other potentially infectious materials and are capable of releasing these materials during handling; contaminated sharps; and pathological and microbiological wastes containing blood or other potentially infectious materials.”<sup>1</sup>

Examples of regulated waste found in dental settings are solid waste that is soaked or saturated with blood or saliva (e.g., gauze saturated with blood following surgery), extracted teeth, surgically removed hard and soft tissues, and contaminated sharp items (e.g., needles, scalpel blades, wires). Most waste from dental offices falls into the category of general medical waste and thus can be disposed of in the regular trash. Some examples include used gloves, masks, gowns, lightly soiled gauze or cotton rolls, and disposable plastic barriers or wrapping used to cover equipment during treatment. Since definitions of regulated medical waste vary by location consult federal, state, and local regulations to determine if other waste items are considered regulated medical wastes

**According to OSHA, regulated waste shall be placed in containers that are:**



- closable;
- constructed to contain all contents and prevent leakage of fluids during handling, storage, transport or shipping;
- puncture resistant if discarding contaminated sharps;
- marked with fluorescent orange or orange-red labels with lettering and symbols in a contrasting color (Red bags or red containers may be substituted for labels.); and
- closed prior to removal to prevent spillage or protrusion of contents during handling, storage, transport, or shipping.<sup>1</sup>

#### Reference

1. US Department of Labor Occupational Safety and Health Administration 29 CFR Part 1910.1030 Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens; Needlestick and Other Sharps Injuries; Final Rule. Federal Register 2001; 66 (12); 5317-25. As amended from and includes Federal Register 1991 29 CFR Part 1910.1030 Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens; Final Rule. 56(235);64174-82.

[Return to Top](#)