Sharps are items that can easily puncture the skin. Examples include needles, razor blades, and broken glass. All sharps must be handled and disposed in a manner that prevents you and others from being injured. This SOP applies to sharps that have been used with potentially infectious materials, some of which may be subject to the UALR’s EHS Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan. In addition, non-infectious sharps handling and disposal are discussed.

**Infectious Sharps Handling**

Substitute plastic ware for glassware whenever possible.

Routinely inspect glassware and remove from service those items that are damaged, starred, cracked, or chipped.

Do not handle sharp objects (e.g., broken glass) with bare hands. Use tongs or similar equipment.

Do not leave unprotected sharps (razor blades, scalpel tips, etc.) on bench tops.

Do not store sharps, including forceps, loose in a drawer. Lacerations can occur when an employee reaches into a drawer and comes in contact with an unprotected sharp. Forceps tips can be protected in a small piece of tubing. Other sharps should be confined to their original packaging.

Use needle syringes only when absolutely necessary. If a needle syringe is absolutely necessary to the procedure, use a syringe that automatically re-sheathes the needle.

Used needles must not be bent, sheared, broken, recapped, removed from disposable syringes, or otherwise manipulated by hand before disposal.

Do not try to retrieve items from sharps containers.

In the event of a needle stick injury seek medical attention immediately.
Infectious Sharps Disposal

Ensure that appropriate sharps containers are available in the immediate work area:

- Must be labeled as “Sharps.”
- Must be labeled with a biohazard symbol.

Containers must be rigid, leak and puncture proof, and sealable. A commercially available plastic container that can not be easily opened after sealing must be used for sharps that are contaminated with potentially infectious human body fluids (bloodborne pathogens).

Contaminated sharps cannot be placed in the normal trash until effectively decontaminated, usually by steam autoclaving. Use autoclave indicator tape to demonstrate decontamination. (Note: Disinfected sharps must still be placed in a puncture resistant container, as noted above.)

You may mix non-infectious sharps with potentially infectious sharps only if the entire contents of the container is treated as infectious and it is decontaminated before disposal, as described above.

Deface the biohazard symbol after treating and prior to disposal. Place the sealed and defaced container in the regular trash.

Non-Infectious Sharps Disposal

Non-infectious syringes MAY NOT be disposed of in infectious biohazardous sharps containers. Non-infectious syringes must be disposed of in a proper, non-red, non-infectious sharps container, such as seen below.

Other non-infectious sharps such as broken glass may be place in a rigid puncture-proof container and labeled “SHARPS – NON-INFECTIONOUS” and disposed of in the normal waste stream.