

Safety Action Notice

Reference: SAN2304

Issued: 15 September 2023

Review Date: 15 September 2024

Clinical waste disposal bins and other waste containers manufactured from combustible materials: risk of fire

Summary

Clinical waste disposal bins and other waste containers may be manufactured from combustible materials. This poses a major fire risk in the event of accidental or malicious ignition and would seriously impact on occupant evacuation if stored in escape routes including corridors, stair enclosures, and protected lobbies.

Action

1. Ensure that waste bins and other waste containers manufactured from combustible materials are not sited in escape routes including corridors, stair enclosures, and protected lobbies.
2. Ensure that the fire hazard from waste bins and other combustible waste containers is:
 - included in waste management procedures and that bins are appropriately sited to minimise the risk of ignition.
 - included in the building's fire risk assessment.
3. Where exceptional circumstances dictate that there is a variance from SHTM guidance, there should be control measures put in place to reduce any risk to as low as is reasonably practicable.
4. Procurement procedures should ensure that product specification and evaluation procedures take account of SHTM Firecode guidance and, depending on their application, waste disposal bins should be metallic or constructed from non-combustible material, with both types having well-fitting and lockable lids.

Background

NHS Lanarkshire commissioned fire testing of non-metallic clinical waste bins. This notice is issued to share the learning from the tests with the health board's permission.

During the test, the bin and its contents burned fiercely producing large volumes of smoke.

The test samples burned to destruction in under ten minutes.

Bins and other waste containers manufactured from combustible materials may pose a major fire risk from accidental or malicious ignition and seriously impact on occupant evacuation if stored in escape routes, including corridors, stair enclosures, and protected lobbies.

Suggested onward distribution

Directors of Estates & Facilities
Health & Safety
Logistics
Risk Management
Waste Management Managers

Facilities Management
Health Centres
PFI / PPP staff
Safety Representatives

Fire Safety Advisors
Hospices
Residential services
Supplies/Procurement

Enquiries

Enquiries and adverse incident reports should be addressed to:

Incident Reporting & Investigation Centre (IRIC)

NHS National Services Scotland

Tel: 0131 275 7575 Email: nss.irc@nhs.scot

Accessibility: Please contact us using the above details if you are blind or have a sight impairment and would like to request this alert in a more suitable format.

IRIC remit: general information about adverse incidents, safety alerts and IRIC's role can be found in [CEL 43 \(2009\)](#), *Safety of Health, Social Care, Estates and Facilities Equipment: NHS Board and Local Authority Responsibilities*, issued 30 October 2009.

Report an incident: Information on [how to report an adverse incident](#)

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