



LOS ANGELES COUNTY
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/
INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE
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DONALD L. WOLFE
CHAIRMAN

December 12, 2007

Dr. Jonathan E. Fielding, Director and County Health Officer
County Of Los Angeles Department Of Public Health
313 North Figueroa Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Donald L. Wolfe, Director
County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works
900 South Fremont Avenue
Alhambra, CA 91803

Dear Dr. Fielding and Mr. Wolfe:

INCREASE COLLABORATION TO EFFECTIVELY MANAGE SHARPS WASTE

On behalf of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force), I am writing in support of having the County of Los Angeles Departments of Public Health and Public Works work collaboratively with the health care, solid waste, and sharps manufacturing industries to more effectively manage sharps waste.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared by the County and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of 10 million. Consistent with these responsibilities, and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally-sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a Countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, the waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

As fellow Task Force members, you know first-hand how pervasive sharps have become. For example, approximately nine million people nationwide administer self-injections, generating **three billion sharps per year**. Many of these sharps are generated by people with diabetes and patients receiving home health care, who throw their sharps into their trash containers. However, these sharps pose a significant health risk, especially to sanitation and landfill workers who often encounter sharps that have been thrown into the trash or recycling bin.

In July 2006, Senate Bill 1305 (SB 1305, 2006 Statutes) was enacted. This Bill prohibits a person from knowingly placing home-generated sharps in their trash, recyclable, or green waste container after September 1, 2008. As a proactive measure, local governments have begun assisting residents to comply with the State law. For example, in February 2007, the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Health implemented its Disease Prevention Demonstration Project. This voluntary Project allows enrolled pharmacies to provide consumers with safe disposal options, including selling mail-back or personal sharps disposal containers, or providing on-site collection of sharps containers. There are currently 181 pharmacies enrolled in the Project.

On a parallel front, the County of Los Angeles Department of Public Works (Public Works), in partnership with the California Integrated Waste Management Board and the City of West Covina, is in the process of integrating a sharps collection program into the Countywide Household Hazardous Waste Management Program. As part of the sharps program, Public Works will:

- purchase and distribute limited State-approved sharps disposal containers to residents Countywide, free of charge
- encourage residents to drop-off their accumulated sharps at various collection events/outlets Countywide
- launch a Countywide public education and outreach campaign to educate and inform residents of proper sharps disposal

These two parallel efforts are commendable and a step in the right direction. However, to effectively change consumer behavior and maximize resources, the Task Force encourages your respective departments to work collaboratively with the health care, solid waste, and the sharps manufacturing industries to effectively manage sharps waste. By doing so, including coordinated outreach efforts, we can assure that the highest amount of sharps are collected and disposed of in a safe, convenient, and environmentally-friendly manner.

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We appreciate your consideration of these comments, and look forward to working with your agency on this very important issue. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at (909) 592-1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and
Council Member, City of Rosemead

AW:cw
P:\Sec\Ltr Fielding & Wolfe

cc: Each Member of the California Integrated Waste Management Board
California Department of Public Health (Dr. Mark Horton)
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors
Each City Mayor in Los Angeles County
California State Association of Counties
League of California Cities
League of California Cities, Los Angeles County Division
Southern California Association of Governments
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments
Solid Waste Association of North America
South Bay Cities Council of Governments
The Los Angeles County Disease Prevention Demonstration
Project Advisory Board (Margaret Dooley-Sammuli)
Drug Policy Alliance (Meghan Ralston)
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste
Management Task Force
Each City Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County