

Standard Operating Procedure (SOP): Temporary Storage Guidelines for Healthcare Waste

This SOP outlines **temporary storage guidelines for healthcare waste**, emphasizing proper segregation, secure containment, labeling, and storage duration to prevent contamination and ensure safety. It covers location selection, environmental controls, access restrictions, and compliance with regulatory standards to minimize health risks and environmental impact during the interim storage period before final disposal or treatment.

1. Purpose

To establish standardized procedures for the temporary storage of healthcare waste, ensuring the protection of personnel, patients, the public, and the environment prior to waste treatment or disposal.

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all healthcare facilities handling, generating, or temporarily storing healthcare waste.

3. Responsibilities

- Healthcare Staff:** To segregate and dispose of waste appropriately at the point of generation.
- Housekeeping/Environmental Services:** To transport and place waste in designated temporary storage areas.
- Waste Management Officer:** To monitor compliance and maintain storage area standards.

4. Procedure

- Segregation:**
 - Separate healthcare waste at point of generation using color-coded bins according to waste category (see table below).
- Containment:**
 - Use durable, leak-proof, and puncture-resistant containers or bags compatible with the type of waste stored.
 - Ensure containers are closed securely to prevent spillage or exposure.
- Labeling:**
 - Label each container with the waste category, date, department/unit, and hazard symbol where applicable.
- Temporary Storage Area Selection:**
 - Designate secure, well-ventilated, and weatherproof areas away from public access, food preparation, and patient care zones.
 - Ensure the area is lockable and accessible only to authorized personnel.
- Storage Duration:**
 - Do not store untreated infectious waste for more than 24–48 hours at ambient temperature (<5 days if refrigerated).
 - Comply with local/national regulations for maximum storage times of specific waste types.
- Environmental & Safety Controls:**
 - Maintain clean, dry, pest-proof storage with appropriate spill kits and personal protective equipment (PPE) available.

5. Waste Segregation Table

Waste Category	Container/Bin Color	Typical Contents
Infectious Waste	Yellow	Blood, body fluids, cultures, contaminated materials
Sharps	Red (puncture-proof)	Needles, scalpels, blades
General Waste	Black	Paper, kitchen waste, wrappers

Waste Category	Container/Bin Color	Typical Contents
Pathological Waste	Yellow (with biohazard symbol)	Body parts, organs, tissues
Chemical/Pharmaceutical Waste	Brown	Expired drugs, laboratory chemicals

6. Access Restrictions

- Restrict access to authorized and trained personnel only.
- Display clear signage indicating “No Unauthorized Entry.”

7. Records & Monitoring

- Maintain a log of all waste moved into and out of storage areas, including quantities, types, and dates.
- Conduct routine inspections for cleanliness and compliance.

8. Compliance

- Adhere to national and local regulations governing healthcare waste management and storage.
- Provide training and refresher sessions for all involved personnel.

9. References

- Local and national waste management regulations
- Facility Waste Management Policy
- World Health Organization: Safe Management of Wastes from Healthcare Activities