

## CIRCULAR

**FILE:** AP 6/5/9

**TO:** SPREP National Focal Points

**DATE:** 28 April 2020

**CIRCULAR:** 20/35

### **SUBJECT: MANAGEMENT OF MEDICAL WASTE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

Dear Focal Points,

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to spread and its impacts upon human health and the economy intensifies day-by-day, governments of SPREP Members are urged to treat waste management, including of medical, household and other hazardous waste, as an urgent and essential public service in order to minimize possible secondary impacts upon health and the environment.

During this pandemic, many types of additional medical and hazardous wastes will be generated, including infected masks, gloves, and other personal protective equipment (PPE). The increased number of first responders being sent out to enforce emergency orders will also lead to a higher volume of non-infected items of the same nature. Government officials in charge of managing this emergency must consider the importance of the safe handling, transportation, and final disposal of this waste as they can cause unforeseen “knock-on” effects.

Health care facilities being used to test, isolate, and treat patients of COVID-19 need additional support at this time. In-house personnel responsible for the management of medical waste must be trained and equipped with the most appropriate PPE. Special care must be taken by these key staff to ensure infectious medical waste is appropriately identified, collected, separated, stored, transported, treated, and disposed. As the Pacific Regional Centre for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions, SPREP is able to share information and practical medical waste management guidelines from the [UN Basel Convention’s Technical Guidelines on the Environmentally Sound Management of Biomedical and Healthcare Wastes](#), for authorities seeking to minimize hazards to human health and the environment.

Further resources on the safe handling and final disposal of medical wastes can be found on the website of the Basel Convention’s Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific, in Beijing, which lists a series of guidance documents and best practices at:

<http://bcrc.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/col/1257152450718/index.html>

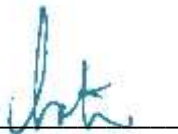
A fact sheet on the management of medical waste during COVID-19 has also been developed by our EU funded PacWastePlus Programme team. It is an easy to read, practical guide for the Pacific setting with additional links to more resources and can be accessed at:

<https://www.sprep.org/attachments/Publications/WMPC/PWP/covid-19-medical-waste-alert.pdf>

The safe management of **household waste** is also likely to be critical during the COVID-19 emergency. SPREP notes that some countries are advising citizens with recent travel history to self-quarantine at home or hotels and urges authorities to be wary of mixing medical waste such as contaminated masks, gloves, used or expired medicines, and other items with domestic garbage. These wastes should be treated as hazardous waste and disposed of separately. They should be stored separately from other household waste items and emergency personnel be informed so they can be collected separately and disposed.

Please share this advisory with the government agencies tasked with the responsibility of managing the pandemic in your respective countries.

Yours sincerely,



Kosi Latu  
Director General.



# SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme



10th Pacific Islands Conference

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