

# Medical Waste Management and Environmental Impact

Proper medical waste management during the delivery of patient care is critical to ensure a healthcare organization's environmental policies and practices are effective and impactful. While the generation of medical waste is an inevitable consequence of patient care, steps can be taken to limit a healthcare organization's impact on the environment. Stericycle's inaugural Healthcare Workplace Safety Trend Report took a deeper look at how healthcare professionals are thinking about their environmental footprint.

6 in 10

## HEALTHCARE WORKERS

think about the environmental impacts of biohazardous waste often<sup>1</sup>

More than  
90%  
OF

## HEALTHCARE WORKERS

feel that improper pharmaceutical waste management has a negative impact on the environment<sup>1</sup>

10%  
OF

ANNUAL CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS are generated by healthcare organizations<sup>3</sup>

Environmental Sustainability Is Top of Mind for Healthcare Workers

1 in 4

## PROVIDERS

state that they are not confident they know how to safely dispose of biohazardous waste generated in an at-home setting<sup>1</sup>

More than  
94%  
OF

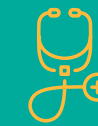
## HEALTHCARE WORKERS

believe improper biohazardous waste management has a detrimental impact on the environment<sup>1</sup>

4.4%  
OF

## GREENHOUSE GASES

are generated by the healthcare sector<sup>2</sup>



## What Can Healthcare Organizations Do to Reduce Their Environmental Impact?

### Rethink Waste Practices

Healthcare organizations can play a role in minimizing their carbon footprint and should evaluate their environmental sustainability practices for areas of improvement. Consider employing the use of reusable materials wherever possible as well as providing the right containers and training to support waste segregation to help minimize environmental impact.

### Prioritize Environmental Sustainability Efforts

Healthcare organizations should also evaluate their waste management partners, prioritizing those who reduce environmental impact, such as using reusable containers. Healthcare organizations can also explore new and innovative ways to help reduce their carbon footprint and keep pharmaceuticals out of waterways, which in turn can help contribute to healthy communities and positive patient outcomes.

### Think Beyond the Four Walls of Traditional Healthcare

As the delivery of at-home care becomes more commonplace and with many patients having increased awareness of the environmental and community impact of medical waste, patients may look to healthcare organizations for a safe and secure way to dispose of these items. Consumer sharps and drug takeback programs provide patients with options to prevent biohazardous materials from adversely impacting community health and the environment.

Source:

1. Stericycle, [Healthcare Workplace Safety Trend Report](#), 2022.

2. Health Affairs, [Health Care Pollution And Public Health Damage In The United States: An Update](#), December, 2020.

3. AP News, [US health agency will prod hospitals to cut carbon emissions](#), August 30, 2021.

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We protect what matters.