



WHITE PAPER

Three Questions to Ask When Selecting a Regulated Medical Waste Disposal Company

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Unknown to many, organizations generating Regulated Medical Waste (RMW) face significant liabilities, even after the waste leaves their facilities. The safety of employees, financial penalties, and even the organization's reputation can all be impacted by medical waste, so the selection of a medical waste disposal company cannot be taken lightly.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) classifies medical waste as 6.2 hazardous material for transportation. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and various state government agencies also seek to ensure this type of waste is properly handled, packaged, stored, hauled, treated, and disposed. To comply with regulations, protect employees and patients, and safeguard the environment, you must be confident your waste hauler is as committed as you are. Three questions will help you choose [the best RMW provider](#) for your facility.

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QUESTION ONE:

Are you confident your RMW partner understands and obeys all regulations?

Asking a few simple questions can help you hone in on a high-quality partner. First, find out if potential RMW partners have full time Environmental Health and Safety staff members responsible for staying current on all state and federal regulations. If they do, then confirm these staff members are well versed in the following:

- [DOT requirements](#)
- [OSHA requirements, including bloodborne pathogens training](#)
- State agency requirements

Regulations are often confusing, vary between states and frequently change. Some state that the waste generator, not transporter or disposer, is responsible for waste until final treatment and disposal. Using [a company with regulatory experts on staff](#) helps ensure sure you follow all laws and are in compliance.

If you're already using an RMW company, ask your pickup driver what waste stream he or she is transporting and what safety protocols (such as spill control kits) are on the truck. If the driver can't answer those questions, he or she is not properly trained to service your facility.





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QUESTION TWO:

Does your RMW company proactively help you stay in compliance?

Full-service RMW companies are flexible enough to meet healthcare facilities' changing needs, such as adding extra pickup days or handling different types of waste. Your provider should also provide DOT compliant containers specific to your waste stream needs. Other key services desirable RMW companies provide include:

Complete handling of RMW, from collection through treatment to final documented disposal. Several companies provide pickup service. However, many of these companies can't treat or dispose of the waste and instead turn over your waste to another company for these services. This limited service, coupled with multiple companies handling your waste, increases your liability. A fully-integrated company that picks up, treats and disposes of waste provides a higher degree of safety.

Staff training and support for regulatory and environmental compliance. Employees who handle regulated medical waste are required to complete [DOT and OSHA training](#). RMW partners know this, and they, too, want your employees to remain safe. A good partner will provide your employees the appropriate training and documentation at no charge.

Manifest and shipping documentation service. Your RMW company should provide you with documentation of all your RMW shipments — and ideally, make these documents available online where permissible. Federal DOT requires shippers to maintain shipping documents for two years, but some states require a longer timeframe. [Online access to your documents](#) assures you will be able to quickly provide required paperwork, anytime, anywhere.

Comprehensive disaster planning and emergency preparedness. Reliable providers have disaster recovery and contingency plans so that in an emergency, waste will not continue to accumulate at your facility. If your RMW partner uses a back-up service and/or location in such circumstances, ask for contractual proof that your facility will continue to receive reliable service.

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QUESTION THREE:

Does your RMW partner share their expertise and experience with you?

Good RMW partners help you stay on track with training requirements that keep regulators satisfied and decrease employee risk. Look for partners that provide:

OSHA Compliance Tools and Services. Protecting your facility and employees is more than just handling Regulated Medical Waste. A full-service provider should also offer a [suite of OSHA compliance services](#) as part of a well-rounded protection program. Ask about their tools and services as well as the staff dedicated to keeping the program up-to-date.

Compliance Evaluations. Evaluating your OSHA practices should always be conducted by a healthcare compliance safety specialist — not a sales representative. Respected specialists spend time on-site observing current practices, identifying safety issues, and noting best practices, and then recommend corrective actions such as training and process improvements.

Waste Segregation Training. Properly segregating waste is the first step in a good Regulated Medical Waste program. [A quality partner](#) will provide services to help you properly segregate waste at your facility, such as [regulated medical waste](#), [pharmaceutical waste](#) or [sharps waste](#).

Email Hotlines. Does your RMW company provide email “hotlines” where you can receive prompt answers to technical questions? For example, if you need to know what container silver nitrate should be placed in, are you confident your waste company will quickly provide the correct answer? What about HIPAA or OSHA-related questions? Having expert access at your fingertips is not only convenient, it helps ensure the safety of your staff and community.

Conclusion

Understanding and adhering to Regulated Medical Waste disposal regulations is vital for healthcare providers to avoid fines, negative publicity, and, in some cases, even loss of professional licenses. Partnering with a full-service respected company, such as Stericycle, helps safeguard your staff and your community from the hazards of Regulated Medical Waste.

Discover Stericycle **online** or call **877-563-2292** to answer *ALL* your RMW compliance questions today.



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