

Environmental Crimes Guide to Beach Wash Up



New Jersey Division of Criminal Justice Environmental Crimes (EC) Detectives have been investigating material washing up on the shoreline since 1987. The vast majority of items identified as medical waste are in fact not medical in nature or use. EC detectives have photographed many of the items that have been misidentified as medical waste and included them in this booklet. Some of the items are:

- Ice Pop Wrappers
- Drug Paraphernalia
- Plastic Tags
- Prescription Bottles
- Feminine Hygiene Products
- Children's Plastic Toys
- Tops from Tube containers
- Chemical Glow Sticks
- Insulin Needles
- Crematory Boxes
- Syringes without needles

These types of floatable debris, that generally come from sewer systems or shorelines in the NY/NJ Harbor area, may wind up on New Jersey beaches, depending upon currents and wind direction. While Federal, State, and Sewer Authority officials have taken significant measures to reduce the amount of floatable debris that winds up in NY/NJ Harbor, it is inevitable that some floatable societal waste will continue getting into waters from which it could wind up on our shores.

If a citizen brings floatable debris such as that listed above to the attention of public officials, officials should explain that the item is not medical waste. Local officials need to be knowledgeable of the routine items that may wash up on the shoreline. An example would be a 2cc insulin syringe and needle. Insulin needles are normally used by non-medical professionals ie: home user and are not regulated as medical waste. After use, the user can dispose of the needle in the solid waste or flush it down the toilet. Once this syringe and needle are in the environment, like all pieces of plastic, it will last many years.

Please remind everyone to be careful in handling anything from the environment. Particular care should be used when handling insulin needles with or without caps. Some type of mechanical device should be used to place the needle into a rigid container, to be disposed of by Health Officials.

When you believe that you have a wash up involving items of medical waste that has come into contact with or contains human blood

or fluids, such as blood vials, more action is necessary. Attempt to collect anything that may have identifying information. This may include plastic shopping bags or items that may appear to be general trash. Secure these items and identify where the items were collected from, and by whom. Turn the items over to the local police authority to be inventoried.

Remember that New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania are some of the most densely populated areas in the world. When the wind is blowing from the east or northeast for an extended period of time, solid waste may wash up on the shoreline. This waste should be removed from the beach and disposed of properly. [If needed, Detectives can examine the waste at the disposal site.]

Please check our website: www.state.NJ.US./LPS/dcj/ecb for updates.

The following are photographs of items routinely misidentified as medical waste.



Pictured above are crack vials that have washed up on the shore.

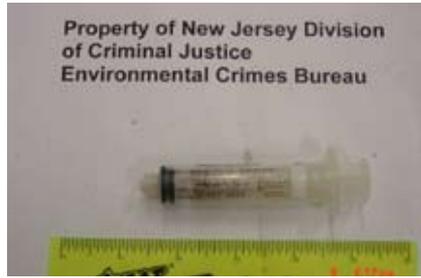
Below is half an ice pop wrapper. The wrappers come in various colors including clear. The ice pop wrappers are routinely mistaken for irrigation devices.



This photograph includes bags typically used to distribute crack cocaine. The red and blue caps are from small containers such as lubricating oil.



The above plastic tag was turned in by a citizen. These tags come in many different colors. The tags may be thinner and can be between 8 and 12 inches long.



The above syringe is used to inject saline solution into IV lines. Other types of syringes are used to apply glue and administer medicine to animals.



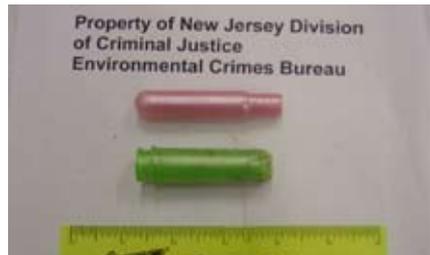
The above insulin needles are commonly used by self-administering diabetics at home. The orange tip is also commonly found on the shoreline. Don't try and replace the tip if a needle is found.



Chemical glow sticks are commonly used by scuba divers, commercial and amateur fishermen. The liquid within the sticks appears to be blood. Often these items are identified as blood vials.



The above photograph of a prescription bottle and a saline bottle are often misidentified as medical waste. Both items are commonly discharged in the trash.



Tampon applicators like those above are routinely turned in as medical waste. Many of these come from combined sewers that discharge directly to surface waters after heavy rain events.

If waste begins to wash up along the shoreline please don't over-characterize the material as medical waste. Contact the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection at 1877 WARN DEP. You can also call the Environmental Crimes Hotline at 609 571-5798. We will help you to identify the waste and guide you on your response.

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