



GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING INFECTIOUS WASTE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19)

WHAT IS AN INFECTIOUS WASTE

An infectious waste can be defined as waste suspected to contain pathogens e.g. laboratory cultures, waste from isolation wards, tissues (swabs), materials, or equipment that have been in contact with tubing, catheters, IGS toxins, live or attenuated vaccines, soiled plaster and other materials contaminated with blood, urine, sputum, faeces of infected patients.

CONTEXT

2. Within the context of the above definition, all materials including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used for the purposes of treatment of COVID-19 that had been declared a global pandemic are considered an infectious waste.

3. In one of the World Health Organization's Technical Briefs on COVID-19, it was stated that there will be a surge in the amount of healthcare waste as the pandemic spreads and that containment and disposal of same may pose challenges until the pandemic is over.

MEDICAL WASTE HANDLING

4. In line with international best practice, medical waste generated from the treatment of highly contagious diseases such as COVID -19 can only be managed in accordance with routine procedures since no new regulations have been made to address it, but advised among others that:

- i. waste handlers should wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment PPE; e.g. boots, aprons, long-sleeve gowns, thick

- gloves, mask, or face shields;
- ii. generators are responsible for packaging the waste for transport to treatment facilities; and
- iii. each containerized infectious waste must be securely closed.

5. In order to ensure environmentally sustainable healthcare waste control practices, the Federal Government established the National Environmental Standards & Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), by the NESREA establishment Act 2007 LFN and NESREA Act 2018 as amended. The Agency has the responsibility among others to enforce compliance with standards, regulations, rules, laws, policies and guidelines on NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND REGULATIONS ENFORCEMENT AGENCY (NESREA) GUIDELINES FOR HANDLING INFECTIOUS WASTE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) environmental matters.

5.1 Pursuant to the above, NESREA is enforcing the provisions of the National Environmental (Sanitation and Waste Control) Regulations S. I. No 28, 2009.

RECOMMENDATIONS

6. The following are required to be implemented by the Health Care facilities generating infectious wastes to ensure Environmentally Sound Management:

- i. Health care facilities treating COVID-19 patients should provide sealed receptacles for the waste materials;
- ii. Contaminated beddings should undergo steam sterilization and patient care wastes should be incinerated.
- iii. Disposable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) used by healthcare workers involved with COVID-19 patients should be incinerated;
- iv. Only properly kitted workers are allowed to evacuate or transport healthcare waste from isolation centers;
- v. Tertiary Health Care facilities are obliged to receive the infectious waste for incineration; and
- vi. Isolation centers currently without healthcare waste incinerators should liaise with the nearest tertiary Health Care facilities to incinerate their waste.

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