



GRANT ALLOWS EASY COLLECTION OF HAZARDOUS “SHARPS” 2,200 pounds of hypodermic needles and other sharps disposed of properly

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Woodland, Calif. (March 8, 2010) – A grant from the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) is making it easier for users of injectable medications to properly dispose of needles, lancets and other “sharps,” thereby protecting sanitation workers from needle sticks. Sharps have been banned from California landfills since 2008. The County developed this program and obtained the grant to make it more convenient for residents to properly manage sharps without increasing costs to the taxpayers or garbage ratepayers.

“Our research shows that sharps users want to properly dispose of them and usually know they can’t go in the trash, but when there are not convenient programs in place, many people simply do not know what to do with their sharps waste,” said Marissa Juhler, Yolo County’s Waste Reduction and Sustainability Manager.

Each year more than 355 million home-generated sharps are disposed in California by people treating medical conditions like diabetes, arthritis, migraines, infertility, blood disorders, and by those who medicate pets and livestock. The County purchased 6,000 mail-back and drop-off sharps containers with grant funds and distributed the containers to 16 area clinics, pharmacies, senior centers and the Yolo County Central Landfill. (A complete list of area locations is available on the Yolo County website, www.yolocounty.org, under the landfill icon; click on “sharps disposal program” and again on “sharps information.”)

Heidi Mikelic, a Davis resident, had been saving her used needles in soda cans for lack of a better option. When the County program began last April, her doctor gave her a collection container.

“Before the County program, I had no place to take my used sharps,” said Mikelic, who gives herself insulin injections four times a day. “No one I asked would take them, and it just didn’t sound right to put them in the trash. Now, I have the ability to take them back to the hospital pharmacy or the Yolo County Central Landfill at no charge. It’s great and so easy.”

The County program offers both mail-back and drop-off return options, and is currently surveying which method is preferred by residents. During the last year, more than 2,200 pounds of sharps have been collected from County residents. That’s about 175,000 needles that won’t pose a threat to sanitation workers or the general public.

“If pharmaceutical companies would take responsibility for their products, that would be better,” said Terri Escobar, of West Sacramento who has used injectable medication for 14 years and now uses the County’s grant and ratepayer-funded program to mail-back her used sharps.

The concept of producers managing and funding take-back programs is called Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) or Product Stewardship, and it is already a successful reality in many countries. The California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), along with its local government and business affiliates, is the driving force behind the shift from local government responsibility via taxpayer and ratepayer funds to producer responsibility for end-of-life product management. CPSC is assisting Yolo County with the grant by providing outreach and education about EPR and the County’s sharps collection program.

For more information contact Marissa Juhler, Yolo County Waste Reduction and Sustainability Manager: 530.666.8813 or Heidi Sanborn, CPSC Executive Director: 916.480.9010. For more information about the California Product Stewardship Council, go to www.calpsc.org.

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