

Biomedical Waste Stream Change on February 23, 2022

January 21, 2022

Good afternoon,

After careful review of the biohazardous waste procedures in place in the MUMC/HSC and MDCL buildings, a re-evaluation of our waste segregation was undertaken. The biomedical wastes generated and disposed by the **research labs** in MUMC and MDCL more closely aligns with 'microbiological waste' versus 'anatomical waste'. As such, a decision has been made to convert the current anatomical (red bag / box) waste streams into the microbiological (yellow bag / grey tote) waste stream. This change has several benefits:

- Significant cost savings because the microbiological waste stream is autoclaved at the disposal site versus incinerated prior to landfilling.
- The grey totes are sanitized and redistributed by the disposal company which is more environmentally sustainable.
- The grey tote only needs one yellow liner which is provided to you, which is additional cost savings for the laboratories since there is now no need to purchase a second liner for the receptacle.
- Since the grey totes are plastic and leakproof when in an upright position there will be no leakage incidents, which is an increase in safety for everyone.
- There is no need to change your waste management segregation procedures, which is a convenience to labs due to the lack of required changes in behaviours.
- The totes are plastic so there is less absorbent material in the laboratory. The totes can be placed anywhere in the wet-work area which is convenient and does not otherwise pose a hazard, which is a convenience to labs.

This change does not include the Central Animal Facility and the School of Anatomy. They will continue to use the waste streams in place already.

HOW WILL THIS START?

On February 23, 2022 the existing cardboard boxes and any boxes of red bags will be removed from the following waste closets:

- MUMC/HSC 3N25K
- MUMC/HSC 3N45A
- MUMC/HSC 4H31C
- MUMC/HSC 4N68A
- MDCL 2000
- MDCL4072
- MDCL 5072

They will be replaced with a stack of grey tote bins. Liners will be provided in the waste rooms listed above. Please only take one pouch of 10 bags as you need them. DO NOT use these bags for other uses.

HOW DOES THIS WORK?

- Take an empty grey tote back to your lab. (Please do not bring yellow bags of waste to the closet. Bring the tote back to your lab.)

- Insert one yellow liner. There is no longer a need to double-line the waste container.
- Fill with your biohazardous waste in the same manner as you previously filled the boxes.
- When 3/4 full, tie off the yellow liner, replace the lid and take the grey tote back to the waste closet.
- Waste packaging description and posters are found on the [FHSSO website](#). This will offer further clarity on the packaging process. The posters are also available here and will be posted in the waste closets for go-live.

I HAVE PARTIALLY FILLED BIOBOXES IN MY LAB

This will be the case with most labs. Simply tie off the two red liners, close the box with packing tape, label the box with the lab room#, extension and PI name and bring the box to your biowaste closet.

I STILL HAVE RED BAGS LEFT; CAN I USE THEM TO LINE THE BOX?

No, you cannot use the red bags to line the grey tote. We ask that you return all your red bags to the vendor for a refund (if you can), otherwise submit your leftover red bags to **HSC 1J11A** - or email fhssso@mcmaster.ca for pickup - and we will distribute them to the areas that still use the anatomical waste stream.

CAN'T I JUST PREBAG MY BIOWASTE INTO RED BAGS THEN PUT THE RED BAG INTO THE YELLOW BAG?

No, you cannot put any red bags inside the yellow bags. The microbiological waste stream is autoclaved and shredded at the disposal site. The presence of red bags will be made obvious to the disposal workers and will flag us for non-compliance with waste regulation. This will indicate to the disposal company that we are mis-segregating our waste and we can be held liable and fined by the Ministry of Environment. We ask that you return all your red bags to the vendor for a refund (if you can), otherwise submit your leftover red bags to **HSC 1J11A** - or email fhssso@mcmaster.ca for pickup - and we will distribute them to the areas that still use the anatomical waste stream.

Bagging biowaste in the biological safety cabinet and on the bench can be done in clear regular garbage bags in a manner that prevents leakage as you transport the waste from the BSC or bench to the yellow bag-lined grey tote. A manner that prevents leakage would include either double bagging the clear bags or adding paper towels to the bag to absorb drips.

I HAVE RED SHARPS CONTAINERS; CAN THEY GO INTO THE YELLOW BAG?

No, red sharps containers cannot go into the yellow bag. Only closed, yellow sharps containers can go into the yellow bag. Please discontinue purchase of red sharps containers. Please only purchase yellow sharps containers on a go-forward. Contact fhssso@mcmaster.ca to pick up your, full, closed red sharps containers.

I HAVE YELLOW SHARPS CONTAINERS; CAN THEY GO INTO THE YELLOW BAG?

Yes, yellow sharps containers can be closed then discarded into the yellow bag.

I HAVE ORANGE BAGS, CAN I USE THOSE TO LINE THE BSC/DESKTOP BIN AND DISCARD INTO THE YELLOW BAG?

Yes, orange is the universal symbol and can be discarded into either yellow or red streams.

DO I NEED TO LINE THE TOTE WITH TWO YELLOW LINERS?

No, there is no longer a need to double-line the waste container because it is a plastic, leakproof container.

DOES THIS CHANGE WHAT I PUT INTO THE BIOHAZARD WASTE TOTES?

No, your waste disposal behaviours have been evaluated and you will continue to discard the same items into the grey totes, as you discarded into the cardboard boxes. A poster is provided to remind you. You will also not change your disposal behaviours in the anatomy lab and in the animal facility. Continue your waste disposal procedures.

DO THE WEIGHT RESTRICTIONS CHANGE?

No, the weight restrictions are the same. However due to ergonomic considerations for housekeeping staff, any one container may not be over 11kg or 25lbs, regardless of any limits on the container. This has always been the case.

DOES THIS CHANGE HOW I DO FREEZER CLEANOUTS?

Yes. You would follow the process for freezer cleanout, except request a pail that is yellow.



Figure 1 If using coloured bags, use orange or yellow bags for BSC and bench waste collection. Do not use red bags.



Figure 2 If using clear bags in the BSC or on the bench, ensure the bag has a biohazard sticker on it (make your own or purchase).



Figure 3 If using clear bags in the BSC or on the bench, ensure the waste container has a biohazard sticker on it (make your own or purchase). Ensure the bags are never left unattended due to their lack of labeling when removed from the BSC bin or bench bin.

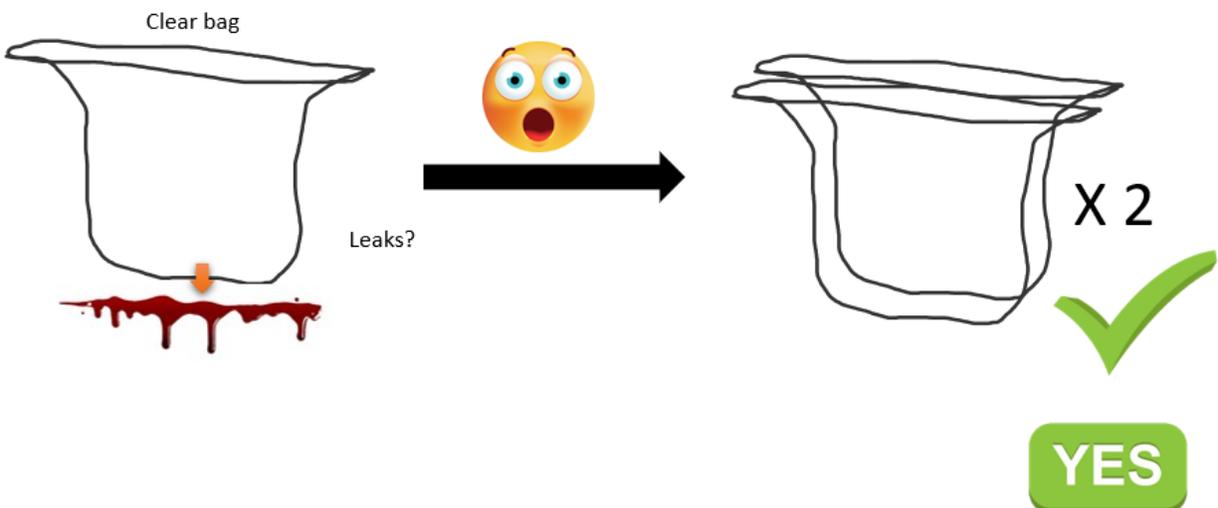


Figure 4 If using clear bags from housekeeping, verify that during regular use in the BSC or on the bench, they do not leak. If they do leak or you suspect they might, double bag.



Figure 5 If using clear bags and placing stickers, the colour of the sticker does not matter.



Figure 6 Sharps containers going into the yellow bag MUST be yellow. They cannot be red.

If you have any further questions about biohazardous waste disposal, please contact fhss@mcmaster.ca for procedures or mbso@mcmaster.ca for waste segregation details.

Thank you

FHSSO Team