

Disposal of needles a headache for many

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A new law prohibiting residents from tossing needles and syringes in the garbage has left many Solano County residents scrambling to find a different means of disposal. From diabetics to HIV/AIDS patients, many groups of people have been affected by the law, which took effect Sept. 1.

It has been difficult to get a clear answer from city and county agencies about where the needles can be disposed of, said Benicia resident H.R. Autz. "Everyone thinks the other guy is handling it," said Autz, who said he has had diabetes for 20 years and takes daily insulin shots. "I can stuff (the needles) in some waste can somewhere, (but) I'm trying to follow the law," Autz said.

The law requires California residents to dispose of "household-generated sharps" - like hypodermic needles, syringes and lancets - only at state-approved household hazardous waste facilities, through state-approved mail-back programs or at hospitals and local agencies accepting the items.

Many residents, like Autz, may be confused because county and state Web sites have conflicting information about disposal options. Two Solano County waste facilities accept sharps: Vacaville Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 855 1/2 Davis St., and the Vallejo-Napa Household Hazardous Waste Facility at 889A Devlin Road in American Canyon. The Vacaville facility only accepts sharps from Vacaville residents while the Vallejo-Napa location accepts sharps from Vallejo and Benicia residents.

The sharps must be in FDA-approved containers, which can be purchased at pharmacies for \$2 to \$20, or obtained for free by Benicia residents at the Benicia Main Street Farmers Market at the VALCORE Recycling booth on Thursdays, or at the Benicia Fire Station at 150 Military West.

All county residents can take sharps in the FDA-approved containers to drop-off boxes at five hospital locations: Sutter Regional Medical Foundation at 770 Mason St. in Vacaville; VacaValley Hospital Emergency Department at 1000 Nut Tree Road in Vacaville; Sutter Health Facility at 690 Main St. in Rio Vista; Sutter Fairfield Medical Campus at 2720 Low Court in Fairfield; Northbay Medical Center Emergency Department at 1200 B. Gale Wilson Blvd. in Fairfield.

Residents can also visit the California Department of Public Health Web site at www.cdph.ca.gov for information about which containers are FDA-approved, as well as available mail-back programs to dispose of needles.