



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 15, 2010) – A grant from the Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle) is making it easier for users of injectable medications in Yolo County to properly dispose of needles, lancets and other “sharps,” thereby protecting sanitation workers from needle sticks. As sharps have been banned from California landfills since 2008, Yolo County has developed a sharps collection program, with grant assistance from CalRecycle, to make it more convenient for residents to properly manage sharps.

“Each year, more than 355 million home-generated sharps are disposed of in California by people treating medical conditions such as diabetes, arthritis, migraines, infertility and blood disorders, and by those who medicate pets and livestock,” said Yolo County Board of Supervisors Chairwoman Helen M. Thomson. “Research shows that sharps users want to safely dispose of sharps, but without convenient disposal programs, many simply do not know what to do with their sharps waste.”

To address this problem, with grant funds, Yolo County purchased 6,000 mail-back and drop-off sharps containers and distributed them to 16 area clinics, pharmacies and senior centers, along with the Yolo County Central Landfill. (A complete list of these locations is available on: www.yolocounty.org (select: Landfill > Sharps Disposal Program > Free Sharps Containers).

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

“Before Yolo County’s 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.”

Yolo County’s 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 were collected from Yolo County residents alone, which amounts to approximately 175,000 needles that will not 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, a West Sacramento resident who has used injectable medication for 14 years and now uses Yolo County’s grant and ratepayer-funded program to mail-back her used sharps.

The next step in the program is moving toward Extended Producer Responsibility, or Product Stewardship, where producers manage and fund take-back programs. Such programs are already a successful reality in many countries and in California for mercury thermostats. The California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC), along with its local government and business affiliates, support the shift from sharps management being solely a local government and taxpayer responsibility to shared responsibility for end-of-life product management with the producers having the primary responsibility. CPSC is assisting Yolo County by providing outreach and education about Extended Producer Responsibility and Yolo County’s sharps collection program.

For more information about Yolo County’s sharps collection program, 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, visit: www.calpsc.org.

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