

COVID-19

Waste Management

Information on Managing Waste Potentially Contaminated by COVID-19

This information sheet is intended to provide additional information to business, the general public and waste management facilities specific to waste.

Health facilities should follow direction from Alberta Health Services on managing waste.

Waste management and recycling is deemed an essential service. Information for businesses identified as essential services has been developed and can be found at <http://alberta.ca/covid19>.

Municipal Solid Waste

Municipal solid waste (household waste) may contain COVID-19 contaminated waste generated from infected persons self-isolating but is not considered biomedical waste.

- Loose waste must be bagged, including waste placed in collection bins.

Waste workers should continue to wear standard PPE for this industry (such as puncture resistance gloves) and follow all Public Health Orders and information developed for essential business.

- Wear gloves before handling any waste
- Dispose, wash or decontaminate PPE
- Don't touch your face
- Wash your hands often

Biomedical Waste

Biomedical waste does not include any waste generated from someone's home (including waste that has been in contact with COVID -19 such as tissues). Alberta's Waste Control Regulation defines biomedical waste as waste that contains or may contain pathogenic agents that may cause disease in humans exposed to the waste specifically generated from:

- human health care facilities;
- medical research and teaching establishments;
- clinical testing or research laboratories; and
- facilities involved in the production or testing of vaccines.

Biomedical wastes requires special handling. Only waste management facilities that have been authorized to accept biomedical waste can receive, store or treat biomedical waste.

For information on biomedical waste refer to the biomedical waste fact sheet:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/disposal-of-biomedical-waste-accepted-industry-practice>

For information on transporting infectious waste:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/transportation-of-infectious-substances>

Landfill Disposal

Municipal solid waste that has been in contact with COVID-19 is not biomedical waste under Alberta's waste regulations. Waste management facilities can accept this waste for disposal, managing the waste in accordance with their approval or registration.

Waste management facilities authorized to accept biomedical waste must continue to follow the requirements outlined in their approval or registration.

Recycling

Recyclables can continue to be accepted where workers wear industry standard PPE, follow all Public Health Orders, as well as the information developed for essential businesses.

- Loose recyclables set out for curbside collection should be bagged

If a recyclable is known to have been in contact with COVID-19 it must be decontaminated or stored¹ prior to recycling. If stored (for longer than several days) then there is no need to decontaminate. Local recycling facilities should be contacted for acceptance criteria prior to shipments.

Equipment Decontamination

COVID-19 may survive on certain surfaces longer than others. Waste handling equipment that has come into contact with COVID-19 waste should be cleaned and decontaminated as needed.

Health Canada has developed cleaning and decontamination information:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19.html>

For more information on how to prevent the spread visit: <https://www.alberta.ca/prevent-the-spread.aspx>

Cleaning Products

Some home and office cleaning and disinfectant chemicals (such as bleach) can be classified as hazardous waste.

Companies requiring hazardous waste disposal can refer to the contact list of approved Alberta facilities found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/hazardous-facilities.aspx>

Where Albertans are unable to access a household hazardous waste (HHW) collection site at this time, they should store the HHW safely in a garage or shed (where possible) until collection sites become accessible.

For more information on household hazardous waste (HHW) refer to the HHW webpage: <https://www.alberta.ca/hazardous-waste-households-and-municipalities-overview.aspx>

Disinfectant wipes and paper towels that are used in the cleaning and disinfection process are not considered hazardous waste and can be disposed of into the regular solid municipal waste stream.

Some paper towels may be acceptable for composting. Contact your local municipality or service providers for the most current information on acceptable materials.

- All wastes should be bagged and disposed.
- Re-usable cleaning cloth rags may be laundered.
- Wipes should never be flushed into the toilet.

Albertans should avoid flushing items not intended for toilets because they can block sanitary lines, create service disruptions and cause sewer backups.

¹ Alberta Health reports that studies suggest that the virus generally only survives for a few hours on a surface, though it may be possible for it to survive several days under ideal conditions.