



LOS ANGELES COUNTY  
SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE/  
INTEGRATED WASTE MANAGEMENT TASK FORCE  
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DONALD L. WOLFE  
CHAIRMAN

December 12, 2007

Ms. Margo Reid Brown, Chair  
California Integrated Waste Management Board  
1001 I Street  
Sacramento, CA 95812-2815

Dr. Mark Horton, Director  
California Department of Public Health  
P.O. Box 997435 MS-7602  
Sacramento, CA 95899-7435

Dear Ms. Brown and Dr. Horton:

**REQUEST FOR COLLABORATION BETWEEN STATE AGENCIES TO  
EFFECTIVELY MANAGE SHARPS AND PHARMACEUTICAL WASTES**

The Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force (Task Force) respectfully requests the California Integrated Waste Management Board and the Department of Public Health collaboratively work with key stakeholders, such as the sharps manufacturing industries, pharmaceutical industries, and local governments, to effectively manage sharps and pharmaceutical wastes. This includes developing and implementing coordinated public outreach programs and implementing take-back programs to ensure residents safely dispose these materials.

Pursuant to Chapter 3.67 of the Los Angeles County Code and the California Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989 (AB 939, as amended), the Task Force is responsible for coordinating the development of all major solid waste planning documents prepared by the County and the 88 cities in Los Angeles County with a combined population in excess of 10 million. Consistent with these responsibilities, and to ensure a coordinated and cost-effective and environmentally-sound solid waste management system in Los Angeles County, the Task Force also addresses issues impacting the system on a Countywide basis. The Task Force membership includes representatives of the League

of California Cities-Los Angeles County Division, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, City of Los Angeles, the waste management industry, environmental groups, the public, and a number of other governmental agencies.

Due to health care advances, the number of sharps and pharmaceutical wastes generated has steadily increased. For example, approximately nine million people nationwide administer self-injections, generating three billion sharps per year. Many of these sharps are generated by people with diabetes and patients receiving home health care who throw their sharps into their trash or recycling containers. However, these sharps pose a significant health risk, especially to sanitation and landfill workers who often encounter sharps that have been thrown into the trash. Moreover, the United States Geological Survey conducted a study in 2002 sampling 139 streams across 30 states and found that 80 percent had measurable concentrations of prescription and nonprescription drugs, steroids, and reproductive hormones. Exposure, even to low levels of pharmaceuticals, threatens the marine environment and public health.

To address these issues, the Legislature enacted the following bills:

- Senate Bill 1159 (SB 1159, 2004 Statutes)-Authorizes a licensed pharmacist, subject to certain requirements, to sell or furnish up to 10 hypodermic needles or syringes to a person for human use without a prescription.
- Senate Bill 1305 (SB 1305, 2006 Statutes)-Prohibits a person from knowingly placing home-generated sharps in their trash, recyclable, or green waste container after September 1, 2008.
- Senate Bill 966 (SB 966, 2007 Statutes)-Requires the Waste Board to develop model programs for the safe disposal of household generated pharmaceutical waste.

While local governments are attempting to fill the need for the proper disposal of sharps and pharmaceutical wastes, the Task Force respectfully requests the Waste Board and Public Health work collaboratively with key stakeholders, such as the sharps manufacturing industries, pharmaceutical industries, and local governments, to effectively manage these materials. This includes developing and implementing coordinated public outreach programs, exchanging information in the development of effective model recovery programs, and most importantly, implementing take-back programs. Take-back programs would greatly alleviate the increased burden placed on local governments to manage these materials while at the same time be aligned with the recently approved Waste Board Strategic Directive which promote the concept of "cradle-to-cradle" producer responsibility. By working collaboratively and in a consistent

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manner, we can assure that the highest amount of sharps and pharmaceutical wastes are collected and disposed of in a safe, convenient, and environmentally-friendly manner.

We appreciate your consideration of these comments, and look forward to working with your respective agency on these very important issues. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Mike Mohajer of the Task Force at (909) 592-1147.

Sincerely,



Margaret Clark, Vice-Chair  
Los Angeles County Solid Waste Management Committee/  
Integrated Waste Management Task Force and  
Council Member, City of Rosemead

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cc: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation  
Each Member of the California Integrated Waste Management Board  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors  
Each City Mayor in Los Angeles County  
California State Association of Counties  
League of California Cities  
League of California Cities, Los Angeles County Division  
Southern California Association of Governments  
San Gabriel Valley Council of Governments  
Solid Waste Association of North America  
South Bay Cities Council of Governments  
The Los Angeles County Disease Prevention Advisory  
Board (Margaret Dooley-Sammuli)  
Drug Policy Alliance (Meghan Ralston)  
The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Dr. Jonathan Fielding)  
The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works (Donald Wolfe)  
County Sanitation Districts of Los Angeles County  
Each Member of the Los Angeles County Integrated Waste Management Task Force  
Each City Recycling Coordinator in Los Angeles County