

COVID-19

How Skilled Nursing facilities can optimize costs and safety in COVID-19 waste disposal



Waste By Definition.

As defined by the CDC, COVID-19 waste does NOT need “special” handling

COVID-19 waste is classified as regulated medical waste (RMW) and managed the same as all other RMW. Misconceptions around the handling and disposal of COVID-19 waste can lead to over-categorization of waste, substantial increases in costs, and safety risks to downstream service staff.

Poor handling processes or **over-categorization** of waste can have a significant impact on:



Inflated waste volumes and negative environmental impact



Cross-contamination, hygiene, infection control, and handling risks



Substantial increase in waste disposal costs

HOW YOU CAN REDUCE YOUR DISPOSAL COSTS AND INFECTION RISK

1 Eliminate overclassification of waste and remove bins from the patient environment

Follow experts in medical waste education when it comes to what is and is not RMW (or COVID-19 waste) to ensure that non-medical waste such as uncontaminated PPE or gauze is disposed of in general trash. Proper waste segregation will have a dramatic impact on your waste disposal costs. Half-filled bins will incur substantially increased medical waste collection costs - fill your RMW bins! Removing medical waste bins from the patient environment also removes the chance of trash being incorrectly disposed of in a red medical waste container.

2 Reduce waste handling and repackaging

Look at how your waste is being handled and moved through your facility. Are there multiple people touching the waste? EVS or clinical staff? Is there a way of reducing the number of times a bag is touched, can a waste bin be mobile and moved in and out of patient areas rather than having bins in patient rooms that need to be decanted each day? If using cardboard boxes that require assembly and manual packaging, is there a reusable solution that can minimize labor and workload that doesn't expose staff to touching contaminated surfaces?

3 Minimize infection transfer risk by reducing “touches”

The more times waste is touched, the higher the infection control risk with exposure rate to unclean surfaces and potential cross-contamination. Look for foot-pedal operated medical waste containers or bagless solutions that eliminate surface touch. If using bags, ensure that correct infection control protocols are being used and bags are being tied up correctly to ensure no spillage or risk impact to downstream service staff.