

# Infection Prevention and Control Tips: Waste Management

Based on direct observations in nursing homes in Michigan, Minnesota and Wisconsin, here are some common recommendations to improve waste management infection prevention and control processes.

## Disposal of Contaminated Waste

Many facilities treat trash and linen as biohazardous for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). This is not necessary and could potentially cost facilities thousands of dollars. It is important that each facility develop policies and procedures consistent with this guidance.

The requirements from the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicaid & Medicare Services (CMS) are that only linen and/or trash soiled with blood or other infectious materials is considered biohazardous and should be disposed of appropriately in red biohazard bins.

- Medical waste (trash) coming from health care facilities treating COVID-2019 patients is no different than waste coming from facilities without COVID-19 patients. The management of laundry, food service utensils and medical waste should be performed in accordance with routine procedures. There is no evidence to suggest that facility waste needs any additional disinfection. [CDC information about this topic.](#)
- OSHA further clarifies this language by providing the following [definitions](#).
- Contaminated laundry means laundry which has been soiled with blood or other potentially infectious materials or may contain sharps.
- Other Potentially Infectious Materials:  
Any body fluid that is visibly contaminated with blood, and all body fluids in situations where it is difficult or impossible to differentiate between body fluids.
- CMS refers to this topic in the guidance to surveyors under F Tag 880 – Infection Control. [State Operations Manual](#). Scroll to the end under F880.
- Handling Laundry:  
The facility staff should handle all used laundry as potentially contaminated and use standard precautions (i.e., gloves). If not all used linens are handled as potentially contaminated, staff should provide separation with special identification of bags and containers for contaminated linens with labels, color coding, or other alternative means of separation of the laundry for appropriate handling and processing.

These tips are based on observations during onsite visits. Superior Health Quality Alliance contracted IPCWell to conduct on-site assessments. All data, information and recommendations provided by IPCWell are for informational purposes only. IPCWell makes no representations that the patient safety recommendations will protect the facility from litigation or regulatory action if the recommendations are followed. Nothing contained in the recommendations are intended to be a substitute for professional medical diagnosis or treatment. IPCWell is not liable for any errors, omissions, losses, injuries, or damages arising from the use of these recommendations.