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Healthcare Waste Audit

All healthcare establishments including Hospital and Ambulance Trusts and PCTs should undertake, at least annually, a comprehensive audit of their clinical waste management activities. It is the responsibility of senior managers to establish and maintain effective waste management arrangements, which must be properly monitored and regularly audited. The existence of any policy, no matter how comprehensive that policy may be, is not indicative of good practice and robust and independent audit procedures are essential for monitoring performance.



Audit may be undertaken in-house. Although often convenient, in-house audit rarely provides the best financial option, is prone to error and omission, and may be critically compromised by lack of independence. Properly performed, audit provides the information necessary to develop a structured waste management plan, and provides the necessary assessment of the composition of waste streams and accuracy of waste segregation and of waste minimisation schemes.¹ This proves invaluable to identify accurately the location, type and quantity of waste produced, to identify where options exist to re-use or recycle, and to identify practical opportunities for waste minimisation. Crucially, audit plays a vital role in demonstrating compliance with regulatory standards and, in line with the Duty of Care, to ensure that waste is effectively segregated, safely and securely handled prior of removal from site, and treated and disposed of appropriately.

The healthcare waste audit service comprises a 1 day “snap shot”, or more extensive 3 or 5 day audit. The 1 day snap shot normally comprises:

- Prior review of site waste policy documentation, relevant sections of corresponding Safety Policy and Code of Practice documentation, Standard Operating Procedures for waste management, incident policy
- Interview with key staff
 - Estates management, Waste Manager
 - Nursing managers, ward staff, A&E, HDU, ITU etc
 - Safety Officer, Risk Manager, Security Manager
 - Support services, including subcontracted services (catering, hygiene, ancillary support)
 - Infection Control
 - Pathology and other diagnostic/investigative services managers, Pharmacy
 - Purchasing, supply & distribution manager(s)

¹ Comprehensive waste composition studies necessitate an extensive time commitment to ensure that the results accurately reflect typical waste composition. This generally requires multiple, and fully randomised, waste sampling over a prolonged period. Please call to discuss.

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- Unsupervised Walk round to assess overall standards
- Performance spot checks
 - Waste producers - disposal, segregation, waste composition
 - Hygiene services
 - Portering & waste management staff
- Observation and review of compliance with disposal and segregation policy
- Containers for clinical and related wastes
 - Suitability of location
 - Clear and appropriate marking
 - Security, accessibility
 - Container hygiene
 - Closure, source marking and handling of primary waste containers
 - Consumables supply
- Internal collection and transport of wastes
- Storage areas for wastes
- Satellite storage areas
- PPE, safety standards, site hygiene, spill kits, incident policy
- Waste minimisation, recycling, packaging wastes
- Domestic wastes from clinical areas
- Confidential paper waste
- Laboratory and post-mortem wastes
- Contractor services – waste collections, reporting



Though a “snap shot” audit is inevitably limited by time constraint, this will additionally include an initial assessment of these additional critical areas that affect overall performance of even the most comprehensive waste management policy, and which prove critical to the development of best practice:

- Interface between Trust management and contractors, service providers etc
 - Catering contractors
 - Hygiene and ancillary support contractors
 - Waste disposal contractors
- Training and update training including training for contract staff, student nurses etc

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- o Training and update materials, notices and marking of containers etc
- o Incident and accident reporting structures, with particular reference to contract staff
- o Vehicle standards



Follow-up audit and more detailed management assistance can be provided as required, following review of an initial report.

The audit service includes a comprehensive written review of the findings, promoting and supporting best practice, identifying targets for improvement or development, and identifying deficiencies where these may exist. This report provides a guide for subsequent and more frequent in-house audit, and as a comparator for annual performance review.

Full client confidentiality is assured at all times.

Note that a 1 day "snap shot" audit may be undertaken on a single day only. As activity varies with time of day, we recommend that this is undertaken over 2 half days, timed to coincide with the periods of greater activity. This additionally facilitates meetings with key staff.

Comprehensive 3 or 5 day audits, or more extensive audits that include a detailed evaluation of waste composition require advance planning, as do Trust-wide and multi-site audits. *Please call to discuss.*

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