JULY
SAFETY TALK

Abandoned Waste Collection

Staff will periodically be called upon to collect abandoned waste. There are many hazards in abandoned waste, and there is a serious risk of injury if this waste is not handled appropriately.

Risk of injury or exposure include:

Dangerous reactions of chemicals – if incompatible substances are inadvertently mixed during handling and disposal.

Inhalation of Vapours or particles – accidental release of chemical vapours or dusts from moulds, asbestos and silica during handling could cause serious injury.

Punctures – accidental contact with sharps can result in puncture of the skin and possible exposure to hazardous substances and diseases.

Explosion of pressurized vessels – damaged and corroded compressed gas containers (old propane tanks, paint cans, etc), if punctured, can explode.

Splash contact – hazardous materials on exposed skin or mucous membranes in the eyes and nose can occur during handling.

MANUAL COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Whenever possible, abandoned waste should be collected and loaded for transport using mechanical equipment such as backhoes and loaders. When this is not possible, the following safe procedures should be adhered to:

NOTE: Before handling any abandoned waste which may contain hazardous materials, contact your supervisor for additional instructions. Site specific procedures may be required for the work!

Suspected hazardous waste materials should be left on-site until appropriate precautionary measures, collection and disposal procedures have been determined.

Never open waste containers or bags to inspect their contents - this increases the risk of exposure or injury.

1. Perform an initial cursory survey of the area to identify potentially dangerous conditions including the presence of homeless individuals, unstable structures, discarded hypodermic needles, chemical containers, rodent infestation, etc.
2. Collect discarded needles using tongs (or follow your organizations' specific procedures)
3. Attempt to visually identify material items (without opening containers) before handling them.
4. Do a test lift to see if they can be safely lifted manually and to be sure the bag/container will not fail. ***Do not place your hands underneath the waste material; this increases the risk of puncture injury.***
5. Collect any loose materials using shovels, garbage pickers, pitchforks, rakes, etc.
6. Transport and dispose of the collected waste in a suitable location which limits the need for additional handling. The location may depend on the suspected waste contents.

All workers must wear the following PPE:

- Steel toe boots with steel shanks
- Rubber gloves for biohazards, leather gloves for abrasion hazards
- Reflective coveralls
- Goggles for splash hazards, safety glasses for impact protection

British Columbia Municipal Safety Association

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