

Australian/New Zealand Standard

**Reusable containers for the
collection of sharp items used
in human and animal medical
applications**

AS/NZS 4261:1994

This Joint Australian/New Zealand Standard was prepared by Joint Technical Committee HT/1, Hypodermic and Other Equipment for General Medical Use. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 23 September 1994 and on behalf of the Council of Standards New Zealand on 12 September 1994. It was published on 5 December 1994.

The following interests are represented on Committee HT/1:

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Auckland Environmental Protection Agency
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Australian Medical Association
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Commonwealth Department of Human Services and Health
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Medical Industry Association of Australia
New Zealand Nurses Association
Northern Regional Health Authority, NZ
Royal Melbourne Hospital, Vic.
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Additional interests participating in preparation of Standard:

Australian Confederation of Operating Room Nurses
Australian Infection Control Association
Department of Health, N.S.W.
Federation of Sterilizing Research and Advisory Councils of Australia
Manufacturers of 'sharps' containers
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Reusable containers for the collection of sharp items used in human and animal medical applications

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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee HT/1, Hypodermic and Other Equipment for General Medical Use. It is issued as a Joint Standard under the terms of the Active Co-operation Agreement between Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand.

The objective of this Standard is to ensure that reusable 'sharps' containers can be used safely with minimum risk to the user or transporter of the containers.

It is assumed that all sharp items used in human and animal medical applications are either infectious or potentially infectious.

Users should ensure that the 'sharps' container that is being used is appropriate to the area in which it is being used, with due regard to Occupational Health and Safety Regulations. Thus, for example, the size of the opening of the 'sharps' container must be relevant to the clinical setting.

The term 'normative' has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. A 'normative' appendix is an integral part of a Standard.

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STANDARDS AUSTRALIA/STANDARDS NEW ZEALAND

Australian/New Zealand Standard**Reusable containers for the collection of sharp items used in human and animal medical applications**

1 SCOPE This Standard sets out requirements for reusable containers intended for the safe collection and transport of sharp items used in human and animal medical applications. The containers are intended to be emptied and rendered safe for reuse.

The Standard is not applicable to containers manufactured for non-reusable purposes and which are disposed of with their contents, i.e. used sharp items (see AS 4031).

This Standard is also not applicable to the collection of radioactive and cytotoxic wastes, including sharp items, in reusable containers.

2 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS

1301	Methods of test for pulp and paper
1301.426s	Method 426s: Thickness of single sheets of paper, paperboard and corrugated fibreboard
1319	Safety signs for the occupational environment
1946	Hypodermic equipment—Single-use needles (sterile) for general medical use.
4031	Non-reusable containers for the collection of sharp medical items used in health care areas.

3 DEFINITIONS For the purpose of this Standard, the definitions below apply.

3.1 Container—a reusable receptacle intended for the collection and transport of sharps.

3.2 Reusable container—a container designated or intended by the manufacturer as suitable for reprocessing and reuse. It is *not* a container that is designated or intended by the manufacturer for single use only.

3.2 Sharps—objects or devices having sharp points or protuberances or cutting edges, capable of cutting or piercing the skin.

4 MATERIALS The container should be made of material which, if ultimately disposed of, will not produce emissions or residues or persist in the environment in a manner unacceptable to the appropriate regulatory authority.

NOTE: For non-metallic containers, heavy metals and halogenated materials should not be used.

5 DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

5.1 Handle A container shall be provided with a handle (or handles) or other means of carrying it. Where present and when tested in accordance with Appendix A, the handle or other integral carrying feature shall remain intact and there shall be no separation of the handle or the integral carrying feature from the container.

5.2 Mouth of container The container shall have a mouth or opening for the introduction of sharp objects. The mouth should be such that the ability to remove any contents from the container is minimized. The mouth shall be capable of being securely closed with the closure device when the container is ready for disposal.

5.3 Closure device A closure device shall be provided and be securely attached and integral with the container when in use. Where the closure device is intended to be repeatedly used, when tested in accordance with Appendix B, it shall be capable of securely closing the container.



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