

Management of waste during the COVID-19 pandemic supplementary information

The State Government has identified that the waste and recycling industry provides services that are essential to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document provides additional information with respect to the management of waste during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is low when waste is handled and managed appropriately. Waste handlers should continue using routine hygiene procedures. For example, wearing gloves and washing hands regularly.

The Department encourages people to stay up to date with the [public health and social measures](#) to manage COVID-19 in our community.

Should COVID-19 impact you or your business to the extent that you are unable to continue to effectively manage the risks to the water resource, environment and public health from your activities, please contact DWER's Pollution Watch at the earliest opportunity on **1300 784 782** (24 hours) or email pollutionwatch@dwere.wa.gov.au

Waste services and COVID-19 waste generated in the home

You can take steps to dispose of the waste associated with managing COVID-19 in the home.

COVID-19 waste in the home is generated by taking Rapid Antigen Tests and using personal protective equipment in the management of COVID-19 (e.g. masks, gloves, aprons, tissues, paper towels). These items can be disposed of safely by:

- placing waste into a plastic bag (such as a bin liner) and sealing the bag
- placing sealed, bagged waste into a second plastic bag and sealing that bag too (smaller bags can be consolidated within a larger plastic bag)
- disposing of double-bagged waste in your general waste bin for kerbside collection.

Waste PPE must not be recycled or placed in your recycling, green waste or food and organics bin.

Waste management at prescribed premises

For those needing to seek approval for new or amended waste management premises to support your COVID-19 response, applications must clearly demonstrate that the following criteria are met:

- Your application only relates to changes or new activities that are a direct result of the impacts of COVID-19.
- The proposal is temporary in nature (not longer than three months duration).
- You are able to outline the circumstances that have caused the issue and can demonstrate that you have made attempts to resolve the issue within your own business continuity planning processes.
- Your query relates to waste management that varies requirements given by the Department of Health in relation to collection, handling, storage and/or disposal of clinical waste (e.g. requirements under the Code of Practice for Clinical and Related Waste Management), and this is indicated clearly in your application.

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) will work with the Department of Health to obtain advice on matters that are also regulated under the *Public Health Act 2016* and the Code of Practice for Clinical and Related Waste Management.

DWER will accept brief, abridged supporting documents to support priority COVID-19 related applications. At a minimum DWER require the following details:

- expected duration of the activities or changes being requested
- expected volumes and types of waste that are expected to be managed (including detail of types of clinical waste if relevant)

- a visual representation of the premises layout/change to premises layout (can be a hand-drawn diagram, or hand-marked up aerial photograph or map)
- a brief description of the waste handling processes that are proposed to be undertaken (can be photographs, video files, flowcharts)
- a description of the waste storage infrastructure, including any waste containment infrastructure, or infrastructure that is used to contain spills, control stormwater, or to consolidate/process waste or clean containers (can be diagrams, photographs or video files)
- any other information that relates to your proposed application (be brief).

DWER will assess and consider any application in accordance with *Guideline – Industry Regulation Guide to Licensing and Guidance Statement Risk Assessments*. Each risk assessment will be conducted in reference to the temporary/short-term nature of the expected management.

Applications cannot be considered as priority applications if they relate to new landfill cell infrastructure, or disposal of clinical waste at facilities that lack the appropriate infrastructure to manage risk to public health, water resources, and/or the environment.

It should be noted that any approval considered under the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act) does not negate the requirement to obtain other relevant local, State and/or Commonwealth approvals.

Temporary storage of clinical and other waste less than 500 tonnes is not subject to regulation as prescribed premises under the EP Act, however, waste should be stored in a dedicated storage area to ensure there are no environmental or public health impacts.

Temporary storage of clinical waste

It is essential that clinical and related wastes are properly segregated, packaged, labelled, handled and transported to minimise risk to waste handlers and the community.

Wastes should be stored in containers that are:

- rigid
- water-tight
- preferably with a closeable lid.

If the container does not have a lid, it should be stored in an appropriately covered and contained area to prevent water ingress or release of any spills.

The area in which the contained clinical waste is stored should be sealed and configured to prevent any spills from flowing to unsealed ground or into stormwater drains.

Place clinical waste directly into a rigid clinical waste bin or in a double-layered yellow plastic bag (double-bagging), and clearly label it as clinical waste.

Clinical Waste should not be stored in plastic liners that have been placed directly on floors.