




Date: January 20, 2009

To: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL

From: Councilwoman Gerrie Schipske, Fifth District 

Subject: **AGENDA ITEM: Household Sharps Disposal – SB 1305 Medical Waste Management Act**

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**DISCUSSION**

SB 1305, which went into effect on September 1, 2008. This new law, which is part of the California Health and Safety Code's Medical Waste Management Act, prohibits household sharps waste (hypodermic needles, lancets, pen needles) from being placed in the regular trash. No funding has been provided for the implementation of the law. The California Integrated Waste Management Board is responsible to facilitate and oversee the implementation of the new law concerning disposal of home used hazardous sharps. The new law requires residents to dispose of these items in any of the following ways:

- Household hazardous waste collection sites
- Scheduled household hazardous waste round up events ( two per year in Long Beach)
- Medical waste mail-back service
- Physicians, hospitals, and other medical care providers that are willing to take back sharps from clients.

There are no collections sites in the City of Long Beach, thus making it very difficult for our residents to safely dispose of their sharps waste in a manner that does not violate current law. The City's Refuse Department indicates that it will take more than two years to be able to establish an "Environmental Depot" at which hazardous waste can be disposed of by Long Beach residents. In the interim, Long Beach residents do not have access to local disposal sites.

**SERRF**

The intent of SB 1305 was to remove household sharps waste from landfills. The City of Long Beach, however, does not dispose of its refuse in a landfill but instead incinerates the refuse at high temperatures at the Southeast Resource Recovery Facility (SERRF). In fact, as a public service and at the request of law enforcement agencies within California, SERRF began destroying narcotics and drug related paraphernalia in 1992. The program has been a tremendous success. SERRF has destroyed an average of 17,000 pounds of narcotics each month. This commitment by the City of Long Beach to assist in the removal of illegal narcotics from our cities' streets has saved law

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enforcement agencies hundreds of man hours and thousands of dollars in alternative disposal costs.

**Recommendation**

It is respectfully recommended that the City of Long Beach request of the California Integrated Waste Management Board's authority to continue to allow its residents to dispose of household sharps waste. In doing so, this would allow Long Beach residents to dispose of household sharps in the same manner as they had prior to the new law with the assurance that such waste is not dumped in a landfill but incinerated at high temperatures.

In the interim of receiving approval by California Integrated Waste Management Board to allow continued disposal in household trash, the City of Long Beach needs to distribute information through its Refuse Collection Services as to how and where residents can dispose of their needles, syringes and other sharps.