

Expanding Syringe Disposal Sites



Frequently Asked Questions

Why is there a need for syringe disposal boxes?

Improper syringe disposal has posed an ongoing waste management challenge for some time, and the national opioid epidemic has contributed to this growing problem in recent years. Opioid use and dependence across the country has led to a sustained rise in injection drug use and syringe debris. Portland-area surveys show an increase in the percent of heroin users addicted to prescription opioids before ever using heroin – from 45% in 2011 to 51% in 2016.

Community members have become increasingly concerned about syringes found in neighborhoods, public spaces and businesses. Syringe drop boxes provide a community-based syringe disposal option that is safe and accessible.

Why can't you just throw syringes in the garbage?

You cannot dispose of syringes in the garbage because it is illegal in Oregon. Disposing of syringes in your trash can or a public trash can present an injury risk to waste workers.

How do I safely pick up and dispose a discarded syringe?

Find out how to safely pick up syringes and where to dispose of them by visiting the [Multnomah County syringe disposal page](#).

What is currently being done to address syringes disposal?

City of Portland: The City has a number of initiatives to dispose of improperly discarded syringes. They include regular camp cleanups, Portland Park Technician clean ups, and sharp disposal containers in several downtown and east side Portland Loos.

Metro: The Metro regional government currently operates two transfer stations with household hazardous waste facilities in NW Portland and Oregon City. These facilities accept syringes for a disposal fee of \$5 and offer a container exchange program. For more information, please see [Metro's website](#) or call Metro at (503) 234-3000 for assistance.



Metro also has clean-up crews that work across the community to dispose of waste. [The Regional Illegal Dumping \(RID\) Patrol](#) cleans up illegal dump sites that are left on public lands and right of ways. Metro also conducts cleanup efforts of the natural resource areas under their jurisdiction.

Multnomah County: [Multnomah County and Outside In syringe exchange program](#) collected almost 5.5 million syringes combined in calendar year 2017 (5.487 million). Multnomah County syringe exchange alone collected 4.5 million. Syringe exchange programs [improve the odds](#) that people who inject drugs will dispose of used syringes in a proper manner and reduce the spread of HIV, Hepatitis C and other diseases.

Syringe exchange staff offer harm-reduction counseling, and health and social service referrals. The program hands out sharps containers, increasing the likelihood that their used syringes will be safely stored until they are returned, and provides information on how to safely pick up and dispose of discarded sharps.

The City and County also have one syringe drop box on the west side of the Waterfront Esplanade, under the Burnside Bridge. And the County Library system will soon have small disposal containers in all of their bathrooms.

TriMet: The TriMet Facilities Division is responsible for the regular cleanup of their buses, trains, and transit station. This includes more than 120 platforms and 36 elevators. Although there is no dedicated syringe disposal team, it is part of the regular course of their cleanup.

What's the plan for new syringe drop boxes?

Multnomah County, the City of Portland, TriMet, Metro and Downtown Clean and Safe are working together to expand syringe disposal sites and offer more community education about safe syringe disposal. Six sites are under consideration for this first phase of expansion:

- **Multnomah County:** The County plans to place a box at their transportation division building located on 1403 SE Water Avenue.
- **City of Portland:** The City plans to utilize existing fire stations and parks as disposal sites. The current plan is for two syringe drop boxes to be placed at the St. Johns and Lents Fire Stations.
- **TriMet:** Sites in Multnomah County are still being examined by the TriMet facilities department, with somewhere along the Interstate 84 corridor as a likely location.
- **Metro:** A disposal box is being planned for the Metro Regional Center in the Lloyd District.
- **Downtown Clean and Safe:** Clean and Safe is planning on installing syringe drop boxes in a yet to be determined site downtown.

What's the timeline for placement?

Disposal boxes will be installed this spring at fire stations in St. Johns and Lents. The remaining boxes will be purchased and installed throughout the fall.

Are you working with neighborhoods?

Agency staff have met with neighborhood associations and community groups to discuss syringe debris and to hear recommendations for the best places to install new syringe drop boxes. Partners will continue to talk with neighborhood groups about how well the program is working and where they would like to see additional bins.

What if my neighborhood is interested in having a syringe drop box?

The four partner agencies, through the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement's Information and Referral Program, welcome feedback and solicitations from neighborhood associations and individuals at any time. Individuals and organizations may file an online report. ONI will pass on that information to the workgroup currently tasked with the roll out of the disposal boxes, and it will be included in the consideration of future locations.



What about future sites?

Given the scope of syringe debris in the community, more syringe drop boxes are being planned. Spaces currently being considered include parks, businesses, health clinics, fire stations, and other public buildings.