

UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

JULY 2, 1991

Honorable William S. Cohen
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Cohen:

Thank you for your letter of May 31, 1991, regarding Dr. Charlie Brown's request for information on the disposal of used syringes.

Used syringes must be treated before any recycling to remove the potential for infection. The principle techniques used are incineration, sterilization (gas and steam), disinfection, and irradiation. Grinding and shredding may also be used in conjunction with these methods. EPA does not stipulate that syringes must be disposed of in a landfill. In fact, there are no federal regulations for medical waste generated in Maine.

Some companies recycle hospital plastics after a treatment and destruction process. This is an option that Dr. Brown may want to consider.

Dr. Brown may wish to contact Maine's Department of Environmental Protection to learn about state-specific regulations. A contact there is Mike Hudson at (207) 289-2651.

I have enclosed a copy of the first and second interim reports to Congress on medical waste management in the United States, which Dr. Brown may find helpful. We anticipate that the final report will be completed late this year. Thank you for your interest in our medical waste program.

Sincerely yours,

Sylvia K. Lowrance, Director
Office of Solid Waste