

FAQ for treating and disposing of biohazardous waste

Here are some frequently asked questions on treating and disposing of biohazardous waste based on the **Industry Code of Practice for Managing Biohazardous Waste (Including Clinical and Related Wastes)**, also known as the Biohazardous Waste Industry Code (BWI Code).

Treatment and disposal facilities need to apply the general requirements listed in Section 10 of the BWI Code, as well as any regulatory requirements specified in the jurisdiction where the facility is located.

These FAQs give general guidance only. Biohazardous waste management is highly regulated with many measures required under law. Refer to the BWI Code and relevant regulations in your jurisdiction to understand both mandatory and recommended obligations.

Q1. What licences or approvals apply to waste treatment and disposal?

Facilities must be licensed to receive particular wastes and to operate certain treatment processes on certain wastes. Authority is conferred through a development consent (issued by a jurisdiction authority) and/or a licence usually issued by the jurisdiction's Environment Protection Authority.

Q2. How is biohazardous waste treated?

Australia and New Zealand currently use seven treatment technologies for biohazardous waste:

- Autoclave
- Grinding/shredding and sodium hypochlorite
- Incineration
- Alkaline oxidation
- Microwave disinfection unit
- Rotating autoclave
- Thermal treatment technology

See Appendix 3 in the BWI Code for a description of these technologies.

Q3. What emission standards apply to treating and disposing of waste?

The minimum requirement for emission standards is complying with the licensing requirements of regulatory authorities.

The BWI Code does not set emission or effluent discharge standards for the industry but does encourage a continual improvement process. See Section 10.5 for more information.

Q4. How do I manage operations at a treatment/disposal facility?

Waste treatment and disposal facilities must meet specific management requirements. For example, waste needs to be loaded mechanically into treatment/disposal devices to keep waste

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intact and minimise risks to workers. The plant needs to be controlled and supervised by a suitably qualified and/or experienced person, and staff need to be thoroughly trained. See *Section 10.6: Managing operations* in the BWI Code for more information.

Q5. Do I need to clean containers before returning them to waste generators?

Yes, containers must be cleaned and disinfected in a bunded area or an area bounded by cut-off drains, then checked for damage, before returning them to the waste generator.

Q6. What records do I need to keep?

Records must be kept of all waste accepted at the premises and/or transferred to other premises. See *Section 10.8: Operational records* in the BWI Code for a list of the details required.

BWI recommends that treatment/disposal facilities establish an environmental management system to provide auditable, verifiable documentation to show that their facility is operating correctly. All equipment needs to be regularly checked and calibrated to make sure it is working in accordance with the manufacturer's specification.

Q7. What documents do I need to keep?

Treatment/disposal facility operators are responsible for completing waste control documentation correctly to meet regulatory requirements and help waste generators meet their due diligence requirements. All of your waste pick-ups must be identifiable and traceable back to the generator.

Q8. How do I dispose of treatment residues?

After treating biohazardous waste, the remaining residues need to be disposed of safely and in accordance with all relevant licensing standards and other requirements. Disposal companies must ensure residues meet all required standards (biological, chemical, and physical) and consider any options for reuse or energy and resource recovery before disposal. Stormwater must not come into contact with residues, spills or washdown effluents. For more information, refer to Section 11 in the BWI Code.

About the Code

The BWI Code helps anyone working with biohazardous waste to understand their responsibilities and work towards environmental best practice in the safe and cost-effective handling, transport, treatment and disposal of biohazardous waste across Australia and New Zealand.

The BWI Code is published by the Biohazard Waste Industry (BWI) division under the Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association of Australia (WMRR) – the only national peak body for the \$15 bn waste and resource recovery industry.

To purchase the Code, email the WMRR national office at info@wmrr.asn.au

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