



San Francisco Department of Public Health

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HEALTH DEPARTMENT TO STRENGTHEN SYRINGE CLEANUP EFFORTS

***Collaboration of City Departments, community organizations,
businesses and civic groups focus on Civic Center neighborhood***

(SAN FRANCISCO) – Health Director Barbara Garcia today announced a series of new efforts to strengthen ongoing work to keep City streets clean of discarded syringes. Reducing this litter is the shared goal of a broad collaboration among the Department of Public Health (DPH), San Francisco Public Works, the Library and several community organizations, business and civic groups.

“The Health Department is implementing a rapid response team that will respond to syringe litter in real time, bolstering the resources already devoted to proper syringe disposal,” Garcia said.

In addition to the rapid response team, new efforts will include dedicated tracking and coordination of syringe cleanup in the U.N. Plaza/Civic Center area, increased outreach and education about current syringe disposal options, outfitting the outreach workers at the main library with disposal kits and identifying additional sites for disposal.

The Health Department’s Community Health Equity and Promotion (CHEP) branch oversees syringe access and disposal programs in San Francisco. In response to growing concerns over the number of improperly discarded syringes, CHEP brought a group of 10 organizations together in August 2015 to develop solutions. The group, now called the Syringe Disposal Collaborative, is made up of the Community Health Equity and Promotion Branch, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, Glide Foundation, SF Drug Users Union, Mid-Market Community Benefits District, Tenderloin Community Benefits District, Civic Center Community Benefits District, SF Main Library, San Francisco Public Works, Heart of the City Farmers Market and the Asian Art Museum.

Each organization in the collaborative conducts syringe clean up in the U.N. Plaza/Civic Center area. They shared data from September to November 2015 on discarded syringes to create a snapshot of the current situation. The data collected covered the geographic area from the north border of McAllister Street, east border of Charles J.

Brenham Place, south border of Hayes and Market Street and west border of Polk Street.

Though not a scientific study, the results depict a large, though decreasing, number of discarded syringes, dropping from 4,829 in September to 2,964 in October and 1,785 in November.

“These data are a great starting point for further discussion and collaboration,” said Tracey Packer, DPH director of Community Health Equity and Promotion. “All of the organizations involved are enthusiastic and deeply committed to improving the state of syringe disposal in our community.”

Today’s action builds on a strong foundation of collaboration. In June 2014, CHEP formed a coalition of community and City representatives that recommended placement of disposal boxes where high numbers of discarded syringes are found. There are now 10 24-hour disposal boxes located in the Civic Center and Tenderloin neighborhoods, near the 101 Overpass at Alameda and Vermont and at the Navigation Center in the Mission district.

The Syringe Disposal Collaborative has agreed upon the following next steps:

- Continue to track syringe cleanup in the U.N. Plaza/Civic Center area starting in January
- Create a coordinated cleaning schedule to eliminate duplication and expand capacity of cleanup efforts by June
- Increase disposal options for community members, including:
 - Consider placement of outdoor disposal options in the area based on the data
 - Provide disposal supplies to the homeless outreach staff at the Main Library and other partners that engage with the homeless.
 - Continue to build relationship with Walgreens and educate syringe exchange participants about Walgreens as a disposal option.
 - Continue to provide syringe disposal support to the police.
 - Continue to involve users in disposal efforts.
- Collaborative to continue quarterly meetings for improved coordination, problem solving and updates

The Health Department currently provides syringe disposal training and resources to the Police Department, Public Works, Recreation and Parks, and community based organizations. Syringe access programs are disposal sites that also provide clients with disposal education. Walgreens stores throughout the City are disposal sites as well. The Health Department’s Homeless Outreach Team provides education about disposal and bio-bins for use at encampments.

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