



MEDIA RELEASE

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Council employee sharp injury sparks investigation

A Barkly Regional Council employee has been tested for infection after being stuck by a needle while collecting rubbish at the back of the Elliott Health Clinic.

The staff member was picking up a rubbish bag placed next to a wheelie bin behind the Health Centre last week when a discarded needle spilled out, pierced through a rubber glove and became stuck in his finger.

The employee was treated by staff at Elliot Health Clinic and then later at Tennant Creek Hospital prior to being referred to Alice Springs Hospital for further treatment.

Council immediately informed the Northern Territory Government's Department of Health about the incident, which happened at 8.30am on Tuesday, 8 May.

Mayor Steve Edgington said that Council's first concern is the welfare of staff and that he and the CEO Steve Moore look forward to a full and thorough investigation by the NTG's Department of Health and a suitable outcome.

He said he was shocked to see photos of the contents of the rubbish bag which included several needles, one of which appeared to be full of blood, as well as boxes of prescription medicine with the names of patients fully visible.

"These types of items should not be put in ordinary rubbish bags to be sent to landfill in the first place," he said. "It is obvious that hazardous items were being discarded as there were plastic bags with the label Biological Hazard printed on them."

In a preliminary search of the NTG's Department of Health website, there was no information on a disposal procedure for the lawful use of sharps. However, on a website called *Recycling Near You* it says sharps must not be placed in your recycling or garbage bin.

"For health and safety reasons, please place your sharps in a secure and strong puncture resistant container, such as an Australian Standard Sharps container. You can dispose of this container later at authorised collection points."

The Department of Health has interviewed staff at Elliott Health Clinic and the investigation is on-going.

The Council employee has to wait eight weeks after the test to see if they are clear from infection.

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