

**GUIDANCE
FOR HANDLING RADIOACTIVE MIXED WASTE
AT OFFSITE FACILITIES**

June 2025

Permitted offsite medical waste transfer and treatment facilities are required to monitor medical waste for radioactivity as part of their operational plans to prevent the storage, handling, transport, and treatment of a radioactive mixed waste [California Health and Safety Code (HSC) Section 117730(b)¹] as a medical waste. The following procedure shall be followed for worker and public health protection:

1. Set the radiation detection equipment² to alarm at a level of three times (3X) background. Regularly test the radiation detection equipment with a known radiation source and take action as necessary to ensure that the alarm is operating when a radiation level of three times background is reached.
2. If a portable radiation detector is used to scan the medical waste containers for radiation, the scanning should be done within six inches from the sides of the container.
3. An area away from workers shall be maintained for the isolation of radioactive mixed waste that has caused the radiation detection equipment to alarm.
4. **Any container of medical waste that causes the radiation detection equipment to alarm must be given special handling considerations.** If the waste reads **greater than** three times the background level, the permitted facility shall set the mixed waste aside in the isolation area and immediately contact the California Office of Emergency Services (Cal OES) State Warning Center **and** the Medical Waste Management Program. The report to Cal OES should include the name and contact information of the originating facility of the medical waste, if known. The reporting facility can expect to receive further instructions from the California Department of Public Health, Radiologic Health Branch and/or Medical Waste Management Program as a result of reporting an alarm.

This guidance is being issued in an effort to ensure that appropriate agencies are notified. The phone numbers to report an alarm are as follows:

Cal OES State Warning Center (800) 852-7550

Medical Waste Management Program
Thomas Horner (916) 449-5671

Should you have any questions regarding this guidance, please contact me at (916) 449-5671 or via email at medicalwaste@cdph.ca.gov.

Thomas Horner
Senior Environmental Scientist - Supervisory
Chief, Medical Waste Management Program

1. HSC 117730 - "Mixed waste" means mixtures of medical and nonmedical waste. Mixed waste is medical waste, except for all of the following:
 - (b) Medical waste and radioactive waste is radioactive waste and is subject to regulation as specified in the statutes and regulations applicable to radioactive waste.
2. Radiation Detection Equipment is required to be approved as monitoring equipment required of transfer station and treatment facility permits issued by the Medical Waste Management Program. Please contact the Medical Waste Management Program for guidance regarding the appropriate equipment prior to purchase.