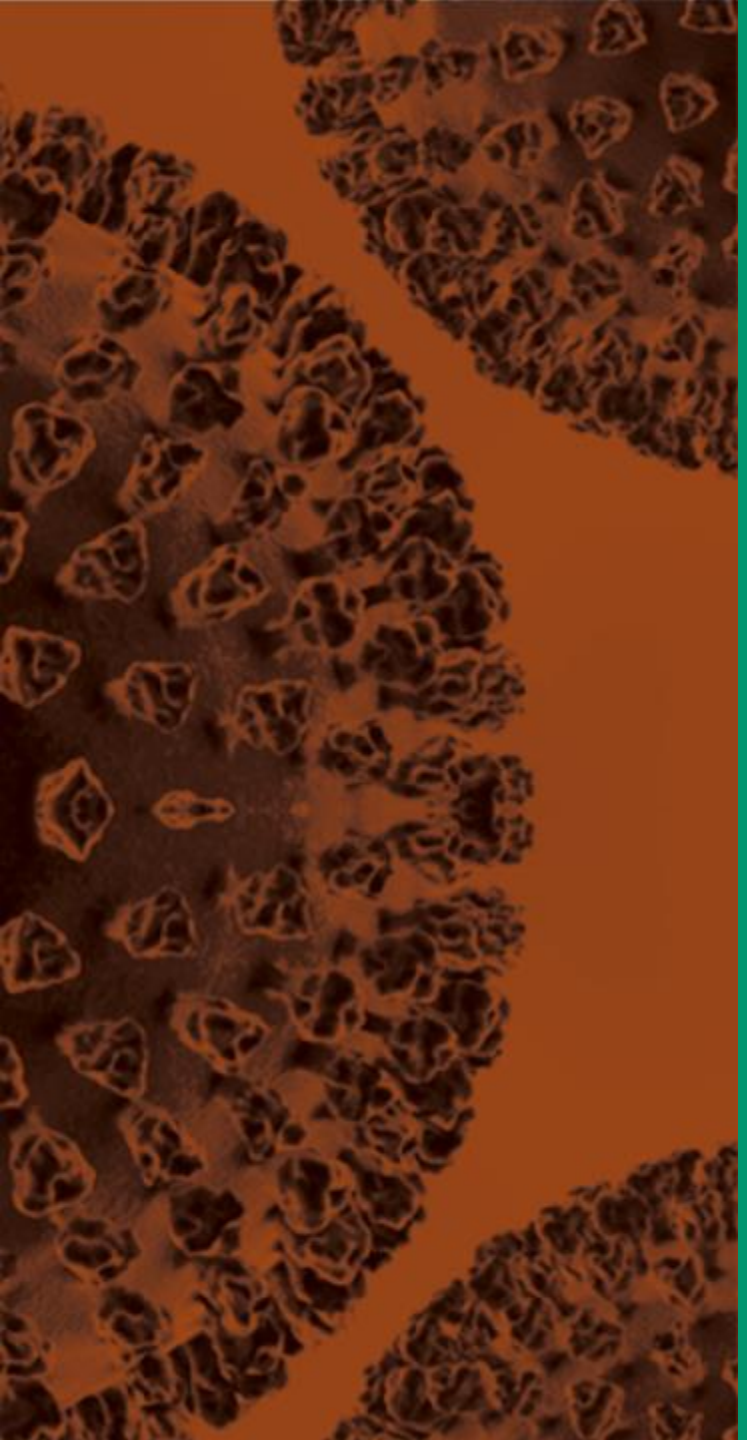

Novel Coronavirus – COVID-19 Waste

March 2020

Stericycle Government Affairs - Selin Hoboy

NOTE TO ALL:
Information provided here is not intended to be legal guidance and is subject to change as new information becomes available or as regulatory circumstances change.

We protect what matters.

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Agenda

- What is Novel Coronavirus - COVID-19
- What infection control measures are recommended?
- What measures is Stericycle and Healthcare Waste Companies taking and why?
- How is the waste being managed?
- Communication and Resources

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What is Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

- Novel Coronavirus is a new strain of the general family of Coronaviruses – identified in Wuhan City, China
- Typical symptoms of coronavirus include fever and a cough that may progress to a severe pneumonia causing shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. 1 in 5 infected require medical care or hospitalization.
- Novel Coronavirus can cause more severe symptoms in people with weakened immune systems, older people, and those with long-term conditions like diabetes, cancer and chronic lung disease.
- Currently **believed** to spread human-to-human from close contact possibly droplets inhaled or contact surfaces that may have been infected
- Novel Coronavirus is not the same virus as the flu but they are both not difficult to kill; not typically hardy and is easily destroyed with normal disinfection procedures
- As of March 10 current cases:
  - COVID-19: Approximately 115,997 cases worldwide; 761 cases in the U.S.
  - Flu: Estimated 1 billion cases worldwide; 9.3 million to 45 million cases in the U.S. per year

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What Infection Control Measures are Recommended?

CDC and health departments are recommending standard precautions

- Specific site for health department support: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/php/index.html
- Adherence to standard, contact, and airborne precautions including use of eye protection

CDC is recommending isolation for individuals showing symptoms

- Recommend that only essential personnel should enter the room and personnel entering room should use PPE, including respiratory protection

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Overview of Waste Generators and Waste Generated

COVID-19 waste generators may include

- Healthcare – actual regulated medical waste/sharps generated from care of COVID-19 patient is minimal; seeing a lot of PPE and other solid waste being included; decontamination wastes
- Labs – generating samples and PPE; CDC new guidance
- Quarantine sites – many are overclassifying ALL solid waste as regulated medical waste
- Travel industry (planes, cruise ships) – also overclassifying solid waste as regulated medical waste in some cases; APHIS waste and decontamination wastes need to be properly managed
- Businesses, schools, etc. – cleaning and disinfection of workplaces and schools is starting to occur on a greater scale
  - EPA New information on disinfectants: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf
- Households

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What Measures are Healthcare Waste Companies Taking and Why?

- There are no additional or more stringent regulatory requirements regarding waste management
- Waste materials are not a Category A infectious substance for purposes of packaging and transport
- Healthcare waste companies are capable of managing regulated medical waste and sharps per normal means
- CDC site states: “Medical waste (trash) coming from healthcare facilities treating COVID-2019 patients is no different than waste coming from facilities without COVID-19 patients. CDC’s guidance states that management of laundry, food service utensils, and medical waste should be performed in accordance with routine procedures. There is no evidence to suggest that facility waste needs any additional disinfection.
- Following DOT packaging and tying off of bags is critical to minimize exposure

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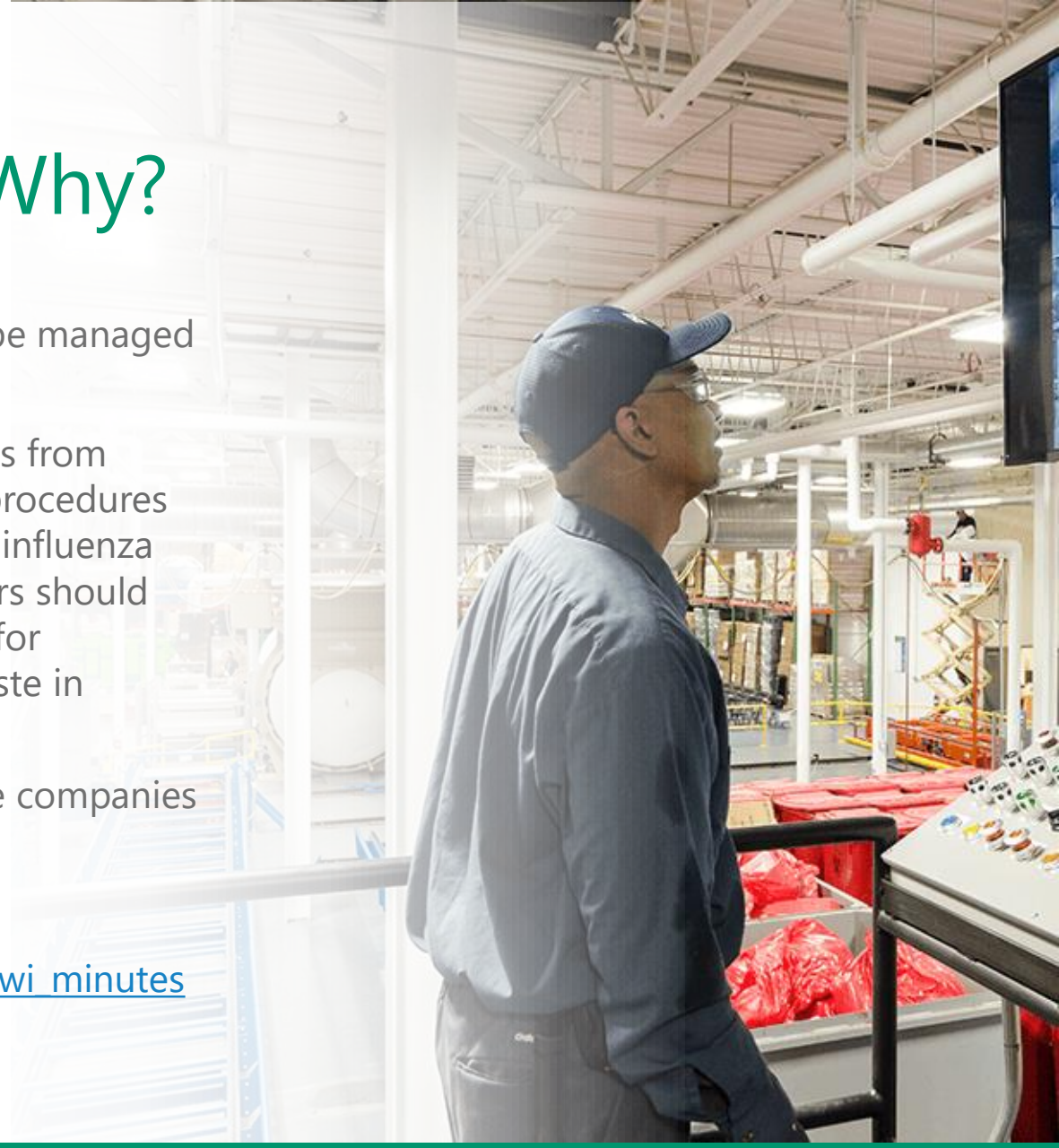
What Measures are Healthcare Waste Companies Taking and Why?

- Waste generated from lab settings are also Category B and can be managed normal regulated medical waste
  - From CDC "For waste associated with testing clinical specimens from suspected COVID-19 PUIs, personnel should follow standard procedures associated with other respiratory pathogens, such as seasonal influenza and other human coronaviruses. Biohazardous waste containers should be leakproof and closed prior to removal from the laboratory for decontamination. If there is no autoclave onsite, then pack waste in accordance with institutional policy and procedures."
- Healthcare Waste Institute, Stericycle, and other healthcare waste companies (i.e. Trilogy) have all put out guidance on management of waste:
  - https://www.stericycle.com/landing-pages/novel-coronavirus
  - https://cdn.ymaws.com/wasterecycling.org/resource/resmgr/hwi_minutes/HWI_COVID-2019_FAQs.pd



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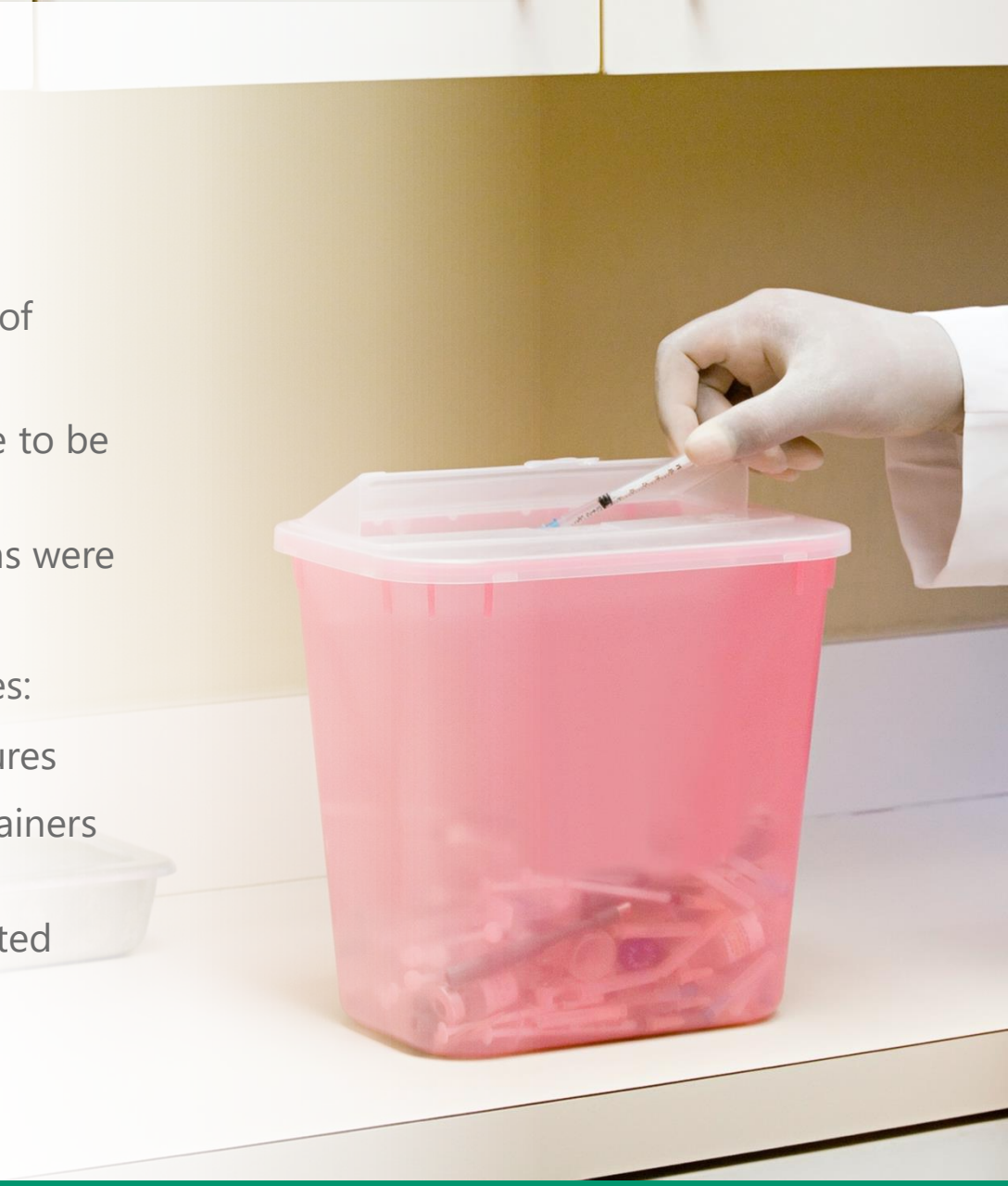
What measures is Stericycle taking and why?

- *Initially* Stericycle required special packaging due to unknown nature of virus and also limited information from authorities:
  - Only corrugated or disposable containers were to be used and were to be marked with "C"
  - Reusable sharps containers from confirmed COVID-19 patient rooms were to be placed in the red bag and disposed.
- *After* conversations with CDC, OSHA, DOT, other international agencies:
  - All medical waste will be packaged and managed per usual procedures
  - Stericycle will not be servicing sharps containers or comingled containers (Rx and sharps) in patient isolation rooms
    - Isolation rooms with respiratory hazards (which we initially restricted instead of all isolation rooms) are not always well marked, nor is consistent marking/signage used



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How is the waste being managed?

- All properly permitted RMW facilities should be able to manage this waste; autoclave and incineration facilities can manage this waste
  - Incineration should only be required for wastes that may already require incineration (pathological/trace chemo/non-haz Rx)
- CDC and local authorities are not limiting management through pre-shredded operations
- Post-treatment wastes can go to landfill (or other final disposal i.e. WTE) and do not require any special handling
- Waste generated in households can be managed as general solid waste and also go to landfill
- Hazardous wastes (including pharmaceuticals) should be managed per current standards

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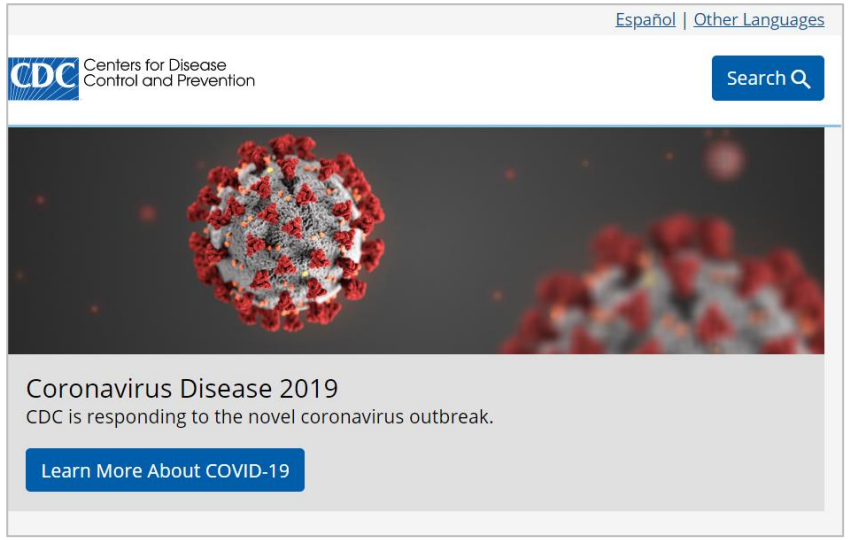
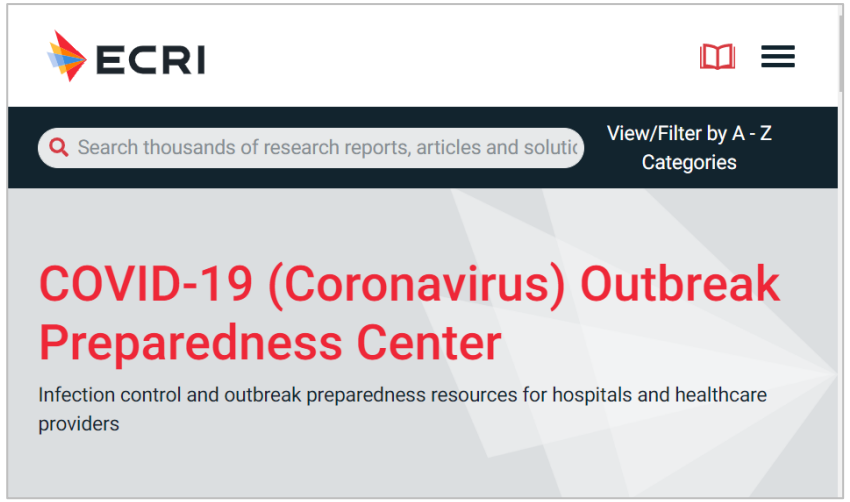
Communication and Resources

- Important to have continued communication with healthcare facilities on importance of proper waste packaging
  - Tying off bags properly
  - Closing all sharps containers prior to disposal securely
  - Properly closing all boxes and reusable containers
  - Adhering to waste company protocols

- Check CDC – **DAILY**
- ECRI: https://www.ecri.org/coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak-preparedness-center/
- Stericycle website update





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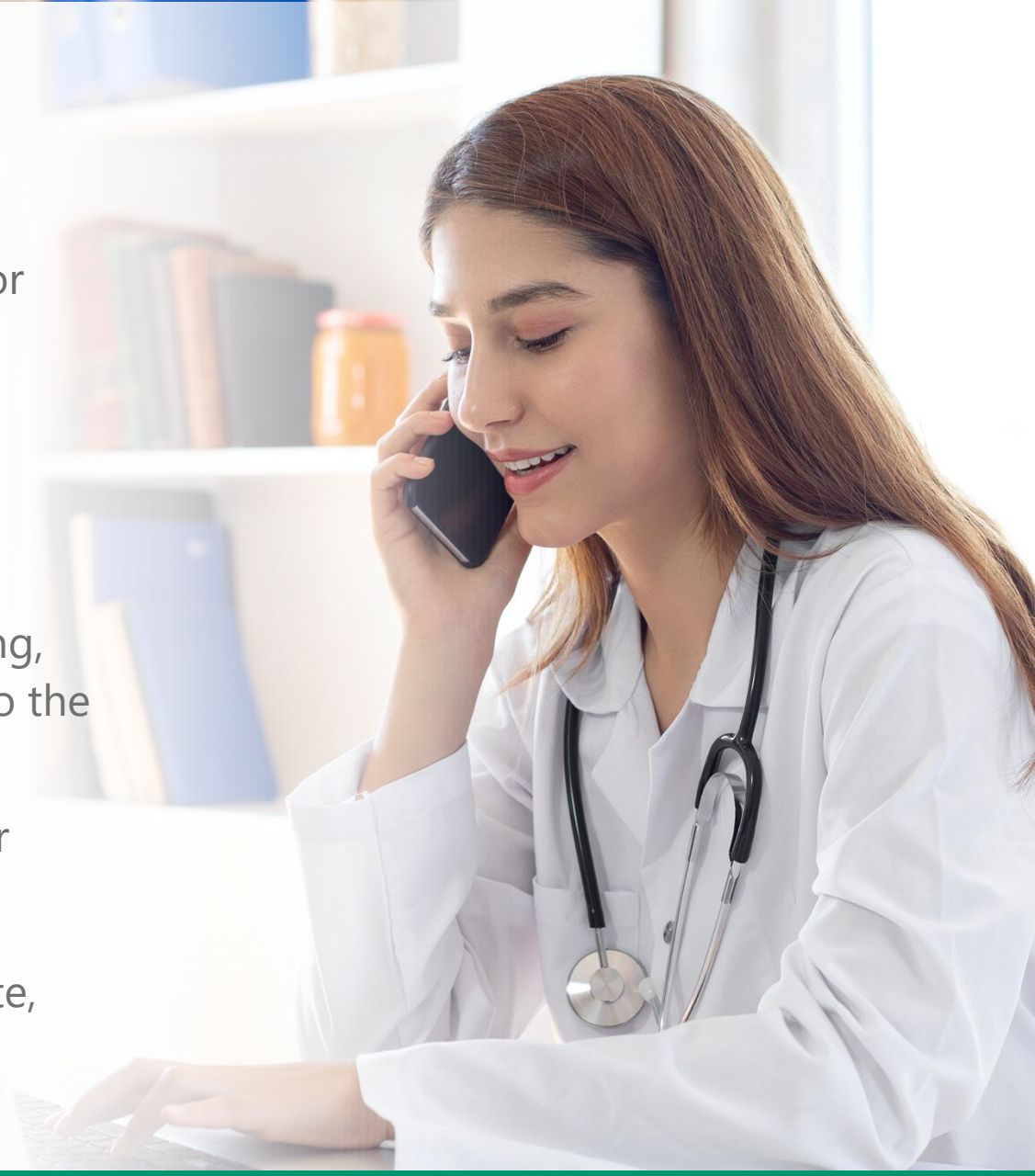
How can we work together?

- Open communication
  - Refer relevant questions or concerns from your agency, or generators to the Healthcare Waste Institute
  - Add waste management as part of emergency response (access to child care, road access, access to healthcare facilities for pick up)
- Help get awareness and attention to proper waste packaging, which is key to protecting all staff, from healthcare facility to the waste disposal facility and in between
  - Rhode Island letter to generators reminding of generator responsibility to properly package waste
- Remind generators of what is/is not regulated medical waste, or sharps, in your state



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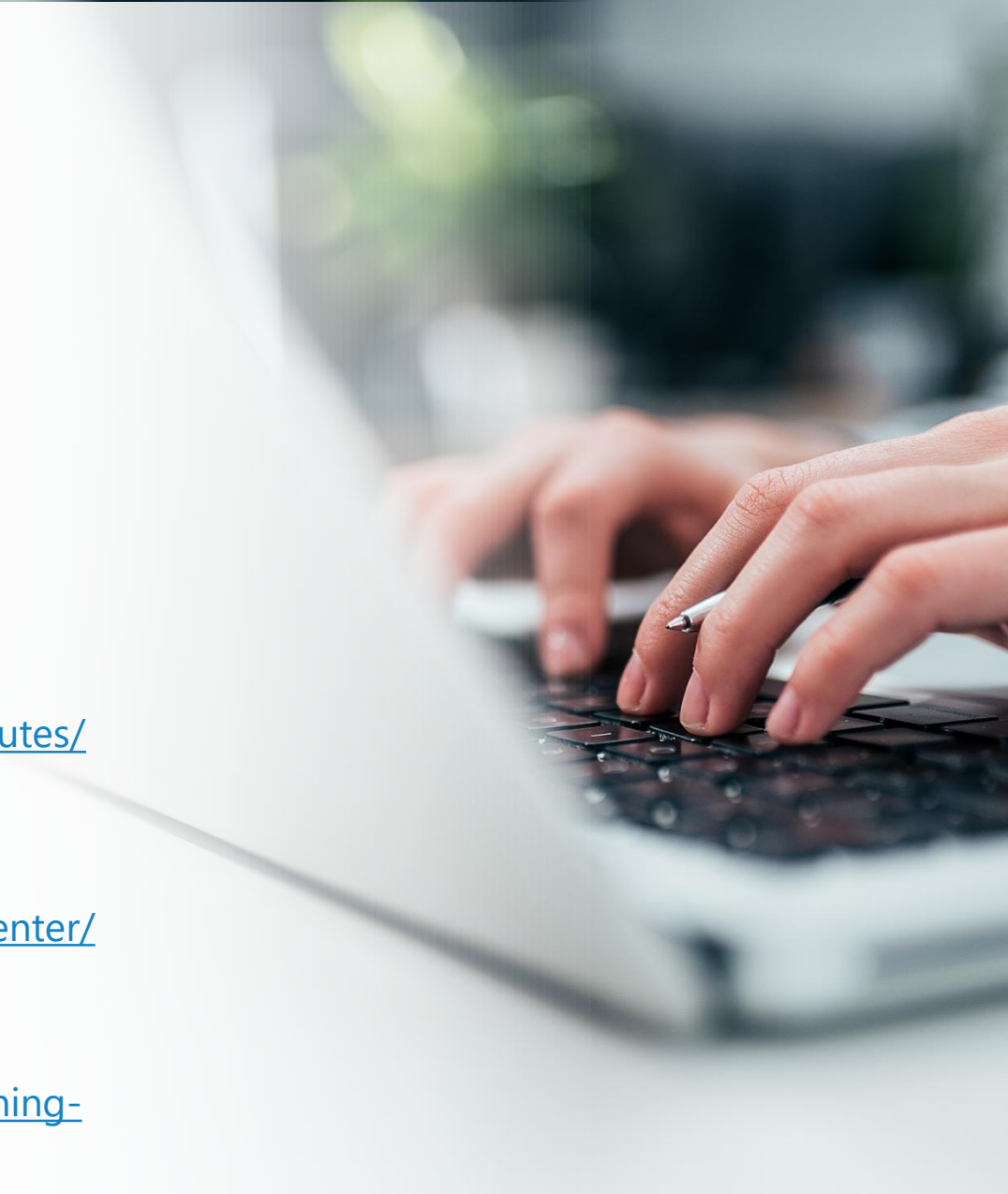
Communication and Resources

- CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
- OSHA: https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/novel_coronavirus/
- World Health Organization (WHO): https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
- Stericycle external landing page: https://www.stericycle.com/landing-pages/novel-coronavirus
- NWRA – HWI Press Release and Guidance Document: https://cdn.ymaws.com/wasterecycling.org/resource/resmgr/hwi_minutes/HWI_COVID-2019_FAQs.pdf
- ECRI: https://www.ecri.org/coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak-preparedness-center/
- DOT PHMSA CAT A Planning Guide:
- https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/transporting-infectious-substances/planning-guidance-handling-category-solid-waste



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