

For the use of Special Container for Infectious Waste



Accidents of this kind might result in injury to disposal workers or cause contents to leak out of containers.

Infectious waste management in Japan

■ Background to infectious waste management

In the past, there have been serious medical incidents in Japan in which medical staff were accidentally infected with hepatitis B and other infections by used needles. Besides medical staff, waste disposal workers have also been infected with infections by needle-stick injury when they were collecting/transporting or disposing of infectious waste. Accidents of this kind made secondary infection of medical staff and infectious waste disposal workers a focus of public attention.

In response, the Japanese government issued the “Disposal Manual for Infectious Waste” (hereafter called the “Manual”) based on the Waste Disposal and Public Cleansing Law (hereafter called the “Law”) to protect disposal workers from infections and promote proper disposal of infectious waste.

■ Current situation of infectious waste management

The infectious waste generator has to use sealed containers for packaging their waste and store the containers at a designated location to which there is no unauthorized access. With regard to the disposal of infectious waste, the infectious waste is mainly disposed of by incineration or sterilization.

When infectious waste generators dispose their waste, they contract the disposal of their waste in general. On the contract of infectious waste disposal, the waste generators have to contract with the infectious waste collectors/transporters and disposers who have the business licenses to conduct waste management from the local government.

■ The requirements stipulated in the Manual to special containers for infectious waste

In regard to the packaging and disposal of infectious waste, Japan's Ministry of the Environment requires the use of the special containers for infectious waste as specified in the Manual, including the followings.

- Hard containers made metal or plastic should be used for containing sharp items such as needles, knives, etc.
- Hard plastic bags or containers should be used for containing solid waste.
- Sealed containers that prevent liquid waste leakage should be used for liquid and slurry-form waste.
- Biohazard mark should be shown on the container to make clear the content of the container.

Biohazard mark

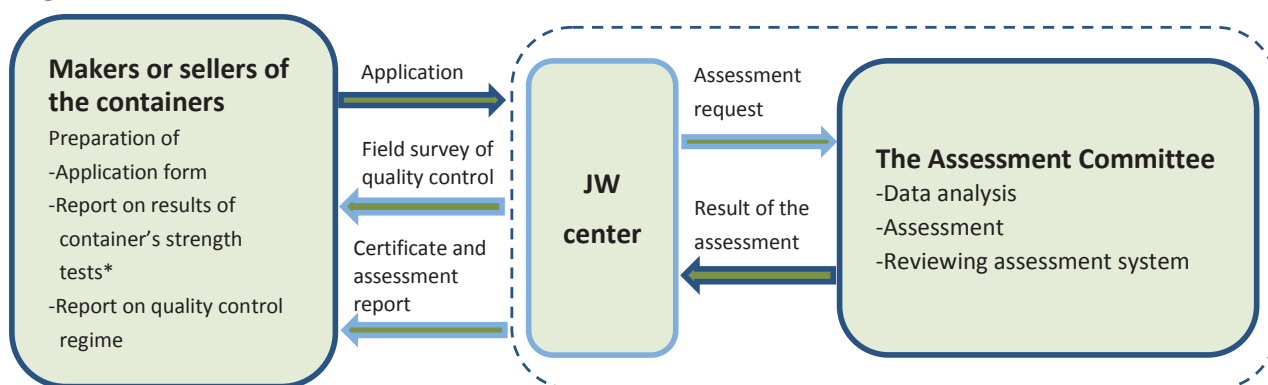


Assessment of Performance of Containers for Infectious Waste

The Japan Industrial Waste Information Center (JW center) provides a service for assessment the containers to be used for collecting and transporting infectious waste based on its own criteria within the range prescribed by the Manual. This service aims at providing reference information for encouraging the use of special container for infectious waste by healthcare establishments, and the JW center publishes assessment containers for different kinds of the infectious waste on the JW center website.

■ Flow of the assessment

The JW center has established the Assessment of Performance of Containers for Infectious Waste Committee (hereafter called the "Assessment Committee"), and the Assessment Committee assesses the report for results of container's strength tests and for quality control regime.



*Container's strength tests: Penetration resistance test, Dropping test, Stacking test, Toppling test, etc.

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