



THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR DOMENIC J. SARNO

HOME OF THE BASKETBALL HALL OF FAME

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 30, 2016

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City of Springfield Reminds Residents to Properly Dispose of Medical Waste

Springfield, MA – On Wednesday, June 29, 2016, alarms were triggered at the Covanta Waste to Energy plant in Agawam, MA by small quantities of short-lived radioactive substances of medical origin. The waste was brought in by a City of Springfield trash truck that had collected waste in the 16 Acres area and cost an additional \$2,000.00 in regulatory fees.

A cause of increase in alarms at the disposal facility is due to patients who receive radiation treatments and return home from hospitals sooner and continue to excrete the byproducts of those treatments into diapers, or to an increase in diaper use by such patients. The radioisotopes present in the byproducts have a half-life of 65 days. This was the case on this past Wednesday.

Another cause of the radiation alarms sounding is due to animal waste disposed of in the trash. When a pet receives cancer or tumor treatments, the pet waste becomes contaminated and needs to be disposed of properly. Three contaminated trash loads from radioactive cat waste cost the City of Springfield an additional \$6,000.00 this year.

Costs to have a consultant identify the type of radiation emanating from incoming garbage loads have risen substantially and may have to be passed on to the resident contaminating the trash truck. Each time the alarm sounds, the cost to the City of Springfield is \$2,000.00. Over the past 12 months, we have had four contaminated loads.

Once a load has been identified and flagged, specialists must come in from Boston to identify the contamination. The truck must remain at the disposal facility until the specialist inspects the material, which is usually within 48 hours. The City of Springfield loses the use of this truck while this happens. Then, the contents of the truck must be spread out and monitored with a Geiger counter, the material identified, contained, labeled and stored until the levels drop enough for normal disposal. It takes between two to three months of storage for the levels to drop.

If you are disposing of regulated material, please consult with your doctors and veterinarians.

For further information please Contact Chris Cignoli, Director of Public Works, at (413) 750-2808 or Scott Donelon, Solid Waste Manager, at (413) 787-6542.

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