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DEP Fines UPMC \$451,000 for Medical Waste Disposal Violations

Capping a two-year investigation, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) fined 12 UPMC hospitals a total of \$451,000 for violations of the Solid Waste Management Act. The action was taken after inspectors for DEP's Waste Management found that large quantities of untreated regulated medical waste were transported to Waste Management Inc.'s Monroeville landfill.

The landfill operators alerted DEP to the problem when they noticed medical waste mixed in with trash in municipal waste shipments from various UPMC facilities. That prompted DEP inspectors to visit the landfill and screen shipments as they arrived from several medical facilities in the region, including two hospitals in the Allegheny Health Network (AHN). Inspectors observed the incoming municipal waste included medical waste such as bloody dressings, body fluids and sharps (needles). A contractor hired by the hospitals removed the medical waste from the landfill and disposed of it at an authorized disposal facility.

DEP inspectors conducted follow-up inspections at a number of UPMC facilities and the two AHN hospitals. Those inspections revealed additional violations including improper labeling, storage and handling of regulated medical waste.

Under DEP regulations, medical waste includes material such as dressings, sharps, tubing, containers, and body fluids. Regulated medical waste must be separated from non-infectious waste, appropriately labeled, and treated to render it non-infectious prior to disposal.

DEP fined AHN a total of \$86,900 on July 7, 2015 for similar violations of the Solid Waste Management Act at West Penn Hospital and Forbes Regional Hospital.

As a result of the DEP actions, UPMC and AHN have updated their policies and training. DEP continues to work with the hospitals to ensure their management practices are in full compliance with the rules and regulations governing the proper management of regulated medical waste. DEP inspectors have conducted follow-up visits to the facilities and will continue to investigate and pursue enforcement measures if and when additional violations occur.

For more information, visit www.dep.state.pa.us (<http://www.dep.state.pa.us>).

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