



SWANA & EREF Partner on Joint Needlestick Survey

Research to Quantify Specific Injuries at North American MRFs

Raleigh, NC (April 27, 2017) – The Solid Waste Association of North America ([SWANA](#)) and the Environmental Research and Education Foundation ([EREF](#)) are conducting a joint research project to quantify and address the issue of needlestick injuries at Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) in the United States and Canada.

Needlestick injuries are a serious risk to waste industry workers, especially in MRFs where sorting recyclables on picking lines and similar activities can put employees in contact with sharps and, as a result, blood borne pathogens.

The objectives of the survey are to inventory observances of needles and syringes in MRF waste streams in the U.S. and Canada and document the extent of needle-related incidences (both those that resulted in no injuries and those that did).

“SWANA is very pleased to partner with EREF on this important project,” stated David Biderman, SWANA’s Executive Director and CEO. “We need to better understand the scope of the needlestick problem at MRFs in order to develop appropriate mitigation strategies, which may include regulatory proposals.”

Historically, the frequency of needles and syringes in the recycling stream and the associated incidence rate of associated injuries in MRFs has not been well documented, though it has been suggested anecdotally in the industry that the rate has increased in recent years. This is consistent with the increased disposal of needles and syringes generated by older Americans in their homes.

“If successful, SWANA and EREF may survey companies and sanitation departments to assess needlestick issues in the collection side of the industry as well,” added Biderman.

“This effort builds off of and expands EREF’s prior data acquisition efforts to better characterize the number of recycling facilities and their activities,” said Bryan Staley, EREF’s President and CEO. “Given their focus on safety, working with SWANA is a natural fit and results from this project provide a useful benchmark for owners and operators to use as they evaluate this issue in their own facilities.”

This project is one of the first to be conducted under the terms of a [memorandum of understanding](#) that was executed by the two organizations in late 2016.

Results will be aggregated in a form that keeps the identity of individual facilities private. To take the survey, interested parties can access the project webpage [here](#).

EREF is a 501(c)3 class charity that funds and directs scientific research and educational initiatives for waste management practices to benefit industry participants and the communities they serve. For more complete information on EREF funded research, its scholarship program and how to donate to this great cause, visit www.erefdn.org.

###

Media Contact:

Catherine Ardoin, Communications Manager

E-mail: cardoin@erefdn.org

919.861.6876 ext. 109