

# Improving Worker Safety: Understanding Needlesticks at Material Recovery Facilities



An estimated 7.8 billion injections occur outside of healthcare facilities annually<sup>1</sup> with 95% of needles discarded unprotected in MSW streams<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>Coalition for Safe Community Needle Disposal  
<sup>2</sup>UltiMed



who responded to the study survey reported seeing needles or syringes at least once per year.

The Environmental Research & Education Foundation (EREF) and the Solid Waste Association of North America (SWANA) collaborated to quantify the number of needlesticks that occur at Material Recovery Facilities (MRFs) with the goal to improve worker safety.

Of the 103 reported needle-related events,



**55%** resulted in a needlestick injury. In the remainder, the needle stuck to PPE without injury.

EREF estimates a needlestick injury rate of

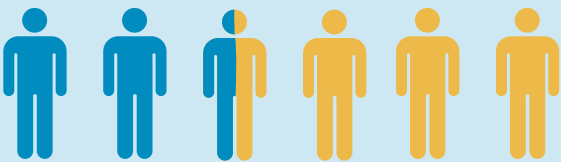
**2.7 per 100 FTE.**

MRF picking line workers experience the highest number of incidences at a rate of

**3.9 per 100 FTE.**

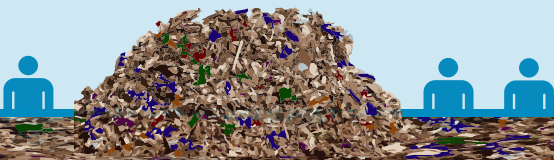
Compared to a total MRF injury and illness rate of 6 per 100 FTE<sup>3</sup>, this suggests

**45%**



of MRF incidents could be needlesticks.

<sup>3</sup>Bureau of Labor Statistics



Injuries to MRF workers could result in up to **\$2.25 MILLION** in direct costs for medical care.



The final report is available at [erefdn.org](http://erefdn.org).



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