

Management of medical waste should be safer

Improved legal regulation of the management of medical waste would help to safer manage medical waste, says the National Audit Office of Lithuania. There is no clear conception of the management of medical waste in legislation; procedures for collection, management and payment for pharmaceutical waste are not approved; requirements for the management of medical waste from provision of health care services for animals are not established. This allows the disposal of medical waste, which may contain toxic materials, heavy metals, various microorganisms, along with domestic waste, which has a negative influence on environment, as well as health of people and animals.



The NAOL found that the National Strategic Waste Management Plan envisaged the drafting of the Medical Waste Management Programme, measures of which would help to solve issues of the management of medical waste. However, the envisaged measures cover solving of only some issues; and only a small share of the measures envisaged in Medical Waste Management Programmes have been implemented.

Inventory of medical waste is coordinated by the Ministry of Environment and Ministry of Health. Their data is not correct; real and correct amount of medical waste is not clear, e. g., data in similar profile hospitals varies up to ten times. Due to inaccuracies of inventory it is difficult to plan ways of management of medical waste, as well as to evaluate the management costs.

Control system developed by the Ministry of Environment aimed at ensuring the transportation of hazardous medical waste is still not operating. This shows that supervision and control of the movement of these waste flows from sites of their generation to final disposal is not ensured.

The NAOL pointed out that some bodies found ways to better and in a more economic way manage medical waste. For example, Alytus Regional S. Kudirkos Hospital drafted and approved the Plan for Saving of Natural Resources and Waste Reduction, which indicates that such medical waste as disposable syringes, medical glass, medical rubber, plaster, paper, photo tapes etc. should be handed over as indirect materials.

The National Audit Office of Lithuania recommended the Government to improve the legal regulation of the management of medical waste. Ministry of Environment should envisage measures ensuring the control efficiency of the movement flows of hazardous medical waste. Ministry of Health and Ministry of Economy were recommended to identify the need of health care bodies for disposal of non-hazardous medical waste in landfills and in order to achieve a more economic management of this waste to propose regional waste management centres to permit the disposal of non-hazardous medical waste in regional landfills.