



SANITATION - HANDLING BAGGED TRASH BEST PRACTICES

Today I want to tell you about the hazards associated with lifting bagged materials from trash receptacles and why you should avoid it if possible. We start by looking at the potential dangers of putting your hands into the container.



The first question you should ask is, what is in the container?

Where is it Located? Residential, Commercial, Public Park, Street or Roadside, or Restroom?

The location might give you an idea of what kind of trash you might encounter. Public areas may be more likely to have biological waste, like personal products. Residential routes present all types of garbage. Commercial settings may have a higher expectation for insects and rodents.

What are Some of the Hazards that I Might be Exposed to?

The possibilities for injury are endless, but some of the most common injuries from handling trash are:

- Strains & sprains
- Cuts, punctures & lacerations
- Flying particles
- Chemical & bloodborne pathogens exposure
- Insect bites and stings

Once you have determined the hazards, think about what you must do to protect yourself from coming in contact with those hazards. Let's look at some of the ones we mentioned.

Strains and Sprains could be the result of heavy or bulky items. The way we protect ourselves is to get help. Before handling heavy items, perform a test lift to see how much it weighs. Most agencies have a weight restriction. If the object is too heavy, **do not lift it alone**. **Be sure to use proper lifting techniques, whether it is heavy or not.**

Cuts, Punctures, and Lacerations - NEVER reach blindly into a trash can or lift a bag or object without looking to see if there are sharp edges, broken glass, or splinters. If possible, lift the can and dump it instead of reaching into it. Be sure you have the proper PPE, like cut-resistant gloves, to avoid punctures and needle sticks. Your arms and wrists are subject to injury, as well as your hands.

Flying Particles - plastic bags tend to hold air, but sometimes chemical reactions can cause gasses to form that may cause the bag to explode if punctured. **Wear eye protection** whenever handling trash.

Chemical exposures can occur when the containers break and the container is compromised or damaged. Handle bags carefully to prevent contact, and be sure to **wear chemical-resistant gloves and other PPE as needed**. Many forms of medical and human waste can be disposed of in household trash. People are not always careful about disposing of diapers (including Adult products), hypodermic needles, and other potentially contaminated materials.

Use Universal Precautions to protect yourself from **Bloodborne Pathogens** and other diseases that can be contracted through contact. Remember, Hepatitis can last several weeks in the open air and on surfaces. **Wear puncture-resistant / water and chemical-resistant gloves** for your protection

Traffic can result in devastating injuries when struck by vehicles. Be sure to **wear your high-visibility clothing** when working around traffic. **Be sure your vehicle has amber flashing lights visible from the front and rear.**

Even if you are not allergic to **bee stings, other insect bites** can be just as bad or worse. Look for insect activity before picking a bag out of a receptacle. Carry insect repellent in your truck to be used when needed.

Discuss whether the Department offers insect repellent or not.

