

UNEP COVID-19 – BLOCK 1 – WASTE MANAGEMENT FACTSHEETS

Factsheet 1: Introduction to COVID-19 waste management

The UNEP COVID-19 Waste Management Factsheets outline UNEP advice to mitigate the adverse impacts of the pandemic on global environment: from how to safely manage the increase of waste produced in response to the crisis, to how to control releases of harmful chemicals in the atmosphere, land and water.

Factsheet 2: National medical waste capacity assessment

Environmentally sound management of medical waste is one of the key challenges during normal times in many countries. During emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, these challenges are magnified because the amount of waste produced increases. This factsheet will help countries in assessing the quantity of infected waste that is potentially produced, and the available technologies that they could use to treat the waste.

Factsheet 3: How to choose your waste management technology to treat COVID-19 waste

As countries develop an inventory of the existing national waste management facilities, they select environmentally sound options for waste treatment using the UNEP Sustainability Assessment of Technologies (SAT) guidance on Best Available Technology and Best Environmental Practices (BAT/BEP).

Factsheet 4: Policy and legislation linked to COVID-19 pandemics

Guidance on policy and legislation will help countries to have a stable legal and institutional basis to better respond to future waste emergencies such as the COVID-19, and to clarify measures to be taken.

Factsheet 5: Links to circularity – Non-healthcare waste

COVID-19 will lead to a greater production and consumption of household and personal health related products, that could be single-use and contain valuable resources like plastics, textiles, metals, electronics. COVID-19 waste, and any other waste, must be collected and treated adequately to avoid littering or uncontrolled incineration causing impacts to human health, ecosystem quality, biodiversity, including impacts on soil, rivers, coastal lines and in the marine system.

Factsheet 6: Linkages of Air quality and COVID-19

Air quality is negatively impacted by environmentally unsound practices, such as open burning or other suboptimal waste management methods. Adhering to environmentally sound practices for waste management, especially COVID-19 waste, and maintaining high environmental standards and enforcement is essential.

Factsheet 7: Household medical waste management strategies

As COVID-19 spreads to the developing world, with limited access to medical support, increased numbers of cases will have to self-medicate at home. Proper management of household medical waste will therefore become key to stop further spread of the COVID-19 virus and avoid putting others, including waste workers, at risk.

Factsheet 8: Disaster and conflict

Disaster and conflict affected countries and vulnerable humanitarian operations with limited capacity, poor infrastructure and resources are likely to face enormous problems in the event of COVID-19 spread and the need for safe, efficient and appropriate solutions for management of solid and hazardous contaminated wastes. This factsheet outlines how to manage this type of waste in the context of camps and camp-like settings as well as informal settlements.

Factsheet 9: COVID-19, wastewater, and sanitation

Raw sewage, and partially-treated wastewater, is a vehicle for spreading diseases and a potential means for COVID-19 to spread faster, for example in areas where sanitation is poor, or where the communities are exposed to open-sewers and black water. COVID-19 brings additional challenges with the increased use of medical products, masks and gloves made of plastics, textiles, and other single-use products that are discarded in the open environment or in existing drainage systems, contributing to the already alarming amounts of plastics, microplastics, and microfibers pollution in wastewater.