

# Disposal of Lateral Flow Device Test Kits: Frequently Asked Questions

## Background

This document has been prepared to answer questions regarding the management of waste arising from the use of Lateral Flow Devices (LFDs) to test for asymptomatic cases of COVID-19. Guidance is available through the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) documents provided to those undertaking LFD testing. This document is to answer questions regarding the management of the waste from the LFD testing process in England.

Working to reduce risk in any role that involves handling waste is a routine, but important part of health and safety considerations. This is because it is recognised that, unless effective measures are in place, staff who have direct contact with waste materials e.g. the presence of items such as nappies, animal excrement, discarded needles etc. are potentially at risk.

Any risks to health are minimised through the use of effective measures, policies and procedures, as required by Health and Safety regulation which safeguard the health of people in the workplace. These measures include the provision of appropriate hygiene facilities, training, personal protective equipment, and reporting systems and procedures to manage suspected exposures.

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### **1. Do wastes from LFD tests pose an increased risk to health compared to other wastes?**

No, they pose no greater risk than any other similar waste, including personal hygiene waste, in the municipal waste stream.

### **2. What is the chance of catching Covid-19 from handling LFD wastes?**

The normal handling of municipal wastes containing LFDs creates no additional risk from the COVID-19 virus when compared to wastes from other respiratory viruses (or bacteria) seen frequently throughout the year. This includes the cleaning and emptying of bins by facilities managers or others working at the location LFD tests are taken.

Similarly, there is no additional risk from the COVID-19 virus when compared to wastes from other respiratory viruses (or bacteria) when LFD wastes are:

- crushed, compacted (in a refuse collection vehicle, or skip), sorted in a trommel screen, or otherwise mechanically handled and managed.
- managed through picking lines if LFD wastes come through a material recovery facility or in other locations where there is manual sorting of wastes.

### **3. If there is no increased risk to health from LFD wastes, why are LFD wastes arising at registered healthcare facilities and mass testing sites managed differently to those wastes from LFD tests completed at schools or in the workplace?**

The legislative framework regarding waste duty of care requires that waste is coded based on the source of that waste.

The primary function of a mass testing site, including those on university campuses, is to carry out LFD tests, so the waste from these sites will be predominantly LFD testing wastes. There will be very little waste generated other than LFD associated wastes and as dedicated mass testing sites are run as healthcare facilities, the waste must be classified as non-hazardous offensive healthcare wastes.

Hospitals and other registered healthcare facilities must dispose of their wastes in accordance with HTM07-01 Safe Management of Healthcare Wastes and the NHSEI Standard Operating procedure for waste.

Where LFD testing is being undertaken as an ancillary function to normal business, such as at a school or workplace that is not a registered healthcare facility and not a dedicated site for the purpose of the Test & Trace programme, LFD wastes are not considered to be healthcare wastes and can be managed alongside other wastes arising at that location, i.e. residual ('black bag') wastes.

Whilst the composition of LFD wastes is the same from both locations, and has been confirmed by Public Health England to not present any increased risk compared to other waste, such as personal hygiene waste, the legislative framework regarding waste duty of care requires that waste is coded based on the source of that waste.

#### **4. Can you recycle LFD wastes?**

The external packaging of LFD testing kits should, in agreement with your waste contractor, be recycled.

##### *Registered healthcare facilities and dedicated mass testing locations*

LFD wastes arising at registered healthcare facilities and dedicated COVID-19 testing sites that have been established e.g. mass population testing sites, including those on university campuses, should be segregated and managed in accordance with Department of Health & Social Care guidance: [Waste codes for mass testing with lateral flow antigen testing devices](#).

##### *Schools, the workplace and other settings where testing or healthcare provision is not the primary activity*

Where LFD testing is being undertaken as an ancillary function to normal business, such as at a school or workplace that is not a registered healthcare facility and not a dedicated site for the purpose of the Test & Trace programme, the LFD test itself (swab, cartridge/device) is not currently recyclable and should be disposed of in your other residual ('black bag') waste bins.

Any disposable equipment such as face coverings, gloves, or aprons worn during the LFD testing process, either by those undertaking the test or those supervising others taking LFD tests, should also be disposed of in your residual ('black bag') waste bins.

#### **5. Can LFD wastes be disposed of at landfill?**

Wherever possible the management of waste should follow the waste hierarchy. It is therefore preferable that, as LFD testing kit waste is not recyclable, where possible this waste should be sent to incineration with recovery for energy. If this is not possible, either due to the availability of local facilities (considering the proximity principle), or due to contractual reasons, then LFD wastes can be incinerated without recovery for energy or disposed of in landfill if authorised by the permit for that facility.

#### **6. The information leaflet for my LFD test states this is biohazardous waste. Is that correct?**

We are aware that the information leaflets (IFU) for some LFD test kits that test for SARS-CoV-2, the cause of COVID-19, state that the used test should be discarded as

biohazardous waste. Using WM3 (Guidance on the classification and assessment of waste) the used test kits have been assessed as non-hazardous waste.

Used LFDs are required to be disposed on in line with waste duty of care regulations which mean that they need to be segregated as non-hazardous offensive healthcare waste from registered healthcare facilities and dedicated COVID-19 testing sites.

LFD testing wastes from a school or workplace that is not a registered healthcare facility and not a dedicated site for the purpose of the Test & Trace programme should be disposed of in the residual ('black bag') waste stream.