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19 Armthorpe Rd. • Brampton, ON • Postal Code: L6T 5M4 • Phone: 1.866 783 7422 • Fax: 1 866 783 7432 • Web: www.stericycle.ca

Hospital Leaders Partner with Stericycle to Reach 25-Year Milestone of Keeping 100 Million Disposable Sharps Containers Out of U.S. Landfills

Leaders promote sustainability services in a sector accounting for 8% of U.S. Carbon Footprint

LAKE FOREST, Ill., June 22, 2011 /PRNewswire/ -- [Stericycle, Inc.](http://www.stericycle.com) (NASDAQ:SRCL - [News](#)) announced today it is reaching a milestone with its [Sharps Management Service](#) (SMS). Nationally, hospitals have partnered with Stericycle by using the SMS to safely and sustainably dispose of sharps(1) containers. Thanks to this collaborative effort, the number of containers kept out of landfills has reached the 100 million mark. Many of these hospitals are listed as The Thomson Reuters 100 Top Hospitals.

The milestone is being announced in time for the 38th annual Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, Inc. (APIC) 2011 [conference](#) in Baltimore from June 27-29. The theme for this year's conference: Translating Science—Sustainable Solutions.

The sharps management service using Bio Systems reusable containers began in 1986. Today, everyday of the working week a hospital removes its disposable containers and Stericycle replaces them with Bio Systems reusable containers. The eco-friendly reusable Bio Systems containers are proactively exchanged by specially trained service technicians before they become full, which decreases the number of needle sticks to staff. Next, the full containers are sent to one of Stericycle's Bio Systems container treatment facilities, where they are robotically opened, emptied and disinfected, fully inspected and returned to an acute healthcare facility ready to reuse.

"One reusable sharps container can be utilized 600 times preventing 600 disposable containers from going to landfills," explained Debra Gillmeister, Stericycle's director of healthcare services. "We encourage hospitals to estimate their diminished carbon footprint as a way to measure the impact of their activities on the environment."

One unique measurement tool that hospitals can use is the [Carbon Footprint Estimator](#) developed by Stericycle using EPA guidelines to quantify the impact of reusable containers compared to disposable ones.

This tool shows that hospitals collectively using Stericycle's SMS have helped prevent almost 132 million pounds of carbon dioxide emissions from not sending almost 226 million pounds of plastic to landfills since 1986. These numbers equate to not burning 6.8 million gallons of gas.

Hospitals, which operate every day, all day long, have a large impact on the environment. A study by the University of Chicago Hospitals(2) found that the American healthcare sector accounts for 8 percent of the U.S. carbon footprint. The analysis found that hospitals are by far the largest contributor of carbon emissions in the healthcare sector, and the second most energy-intensive industry(3).

"With Stericycle's Sharps Management Service using Bio Systems reusable containers, we significantly decrease our carbon footprint. By switching to reusable containers we stopped buying disposable containers. With more than 1.4 million patient visits a year, there are hundreds of thousands of pounds less plastic and cardboard going to landfills. Equally important is managing the regulatory compliance and avoiding significant costs since we implemented the program in 2006," stated Marshall Heins, Chief Facility Services Officer of Memorial Hermann Healthcare System in Houston. Proving the program's efficacy in both safety and sustainability, in an independent national survey of 53 hospitals using the SMS, 69 percent of those facilities now have established green teams to focus on greening their operations; all have achieved a 100-percent sustained reduction in needle sticks.

"The Sharps Management Service is now considered a best practice at all the top hospitals," said Garren Colvin, COO and executive vice president of St. Elizabeth Healthcare in the greater Cincinnati region. "It is a necessity to dramatically reduce health and safety risks associated with sharps and to increase quality. Stericycle's service helped us better understand the types of containers we need and the safe placement of them. This is critical when realizing St. Elizabeth Healthcare, since 2008 when we began the service, has prevented 150,500 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions by diverting 257,107 pounds of plastic from landfills," said Colvin.

"Hospitals can be congratulated for this major milestone. Yet there is more that we can do, and will continue to do," said Josh Miller, sustainability coordinator for Spectrum Health, a nine-hospital system in Michigan. "In our quest to become more sustainable, we've prevented 123,629 pounds of carbon dioxide emissions since 2008 by using reusable sharps containers. Efforts like the Sharps Management Service become a mandate for patient safety, for employee safety and for the environment," noted Miller.

"As a leader in healthcare, we are committed to sustainability efforts that protect people and reduce risk. We started the service in 2004 and are proud to be part of a national movement of healthcare facilities that reached this milestone and contributed to reducing carbon footprints," said Andy Lorio, assistant vice president of support services at Ochsner Health System in Louisiana.

(1) Sharps are medical devices that include needles, scalpels and other objects.

(2) The University Chicago Medical Center, 2009

(3) Schwartz, Judith D. "Putting Health Care on an Energy Diet." *TIME*, November 10, 2008.