

# U.S. Department of Labor

Occupational Safety and Health Administration  
Washington, D.C. 20210



June 1, 1992

Ms. Susan H. Blackburn  
Industrial Hygienist  
Martin Marietta Energy Systems, Inc.  
Post Office Box 2003  
Oak Ridge, Tennessee 37831

Dear Ms. Blackburn:

This is in response to your letter of April 30, in which you requested a clarification on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulation 29 CFR 1910.1030, "Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens". You wrote regarding the coverage of feminine hygiene products as regulated waste.

29 CFR 1910.1030 defines regulated waste as liquid or semi-liquid blood or other potentially infectious material (OPIM); items contaminated with blood or OPIM and which would release these substances in a liquid or semi-liquid state if compressed; items that are caked with dried blood or OPIM are capable of releasing these materials during handling; contaminated sharps; and pathological and microbiological wastes containing blood or OPIM.

OSHA does not generally consider discarded feminine hygiene products, used to absorb menstrual flow, to fall within the definition of regulated waste. The intended function of products such as sanitary napkins is to absorb and contain blood; the absorbent material of which they are composed would, under most circumstances, prevent the release of liquid or semi-liquid blood or the flaking off of dried blood.

OSHA expects these products to be discarded into waste containers which are lined in such a way as to prevent contact with the contents. Please note, however, that it is the employer's responsibility to determine which job classifications or specific tasks and procedures involve occupational exposure. For example, the employer must determine whether employees can come into contact with blood during the normal handling of such products from initial pick-up through disposal in the outgoing trash. If OSHA determines, on a case-by-case basis, that sufficient evidence exists of reasonably anticipated exposure, the employer will be held responsible for providing the protections of 29 CFR 1910.1030 to the employees with occupational exposure.

We hope this information is responsive to your concerns. Thank you for your interest in worker safety and health.

Sincerely,

Patricia K. Clark, Director  
Directorate of Compliance Programs