

Innovative hazardous waste management system launched in South Africa

Healthcare institutions have a legal duty to ensure that their hazardous waste is managed responsibly.

As stipulated in the Proposed National Health Care Risk Waste Management Regulations (2018), the person in charge of a health establishment must ensure that health care waste is handled, collected, transported, removed, treated and disposed of in such a manner that it does not pose a risk to human health and the environment. To monitor for compliance, the Department of Environmental Affairs (DEA) requires that waste generators keep detailed records on the waste management chain.

"The mandated duty of care and record keeping for hazardous waste presents significant difficulty to medical institutions who consign various stages of the disposal process to external service providers," says Eugene Barnard, Head of Healthcare at Averda South Africa.

Therefore, in a bold move that demonstrates their commitment to the responsible management of hazardous waste products, Averda has introduced Averda TruTrak. This innovative waste management system gives clients access to automated waste tracking and record keeping capabilities via an online customer portal – a first to market innovation in South Africa.

Waste management companies are trusted to collect and transport waste, subject it to the required treatment processes, dispose of it in a suitably compliant manner and keep accurate records to support their client's auditing requirements.

Failure to act in accordance with the specific regulations attributed to each step in this process exposes waste generators, their directors, managers, agents and employees to significant liability. The lack of oversight in a system that is vulnerable to human error and mismanagement does little for a waste generator's peace of mind.

However, according to Barnard, the introduction of Averda TruTrak will resolve this concern. "By providing medical institutions with the means to monitor the disposal of their hazardous waste loads, they can ensure that they comply with their legal responsibility to protect the communities they serve," says Barnard.

The system makes use of Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tracking tags which are attached to the containers that hold high risk waste. Then scanners on scales, collection vehicles and at treatment facilities, automatically record information including collection and delivery weight, time, date and location details. This data is automatically captured and uploaded to an online client portal.

Clients are given access to the tracking process via the portal which allows waste transportation to be monitored in real time. This also provides them with access to delivery notes, invoices and disposal reports detailing the nature, quantity and disposal methods for each waste consignment. These are automatically stored and can be printed off as and when required, in line with waste generator's auditing requirements.

"The automation of this process eliminates the risk of inaccurate or incomplete reporting as well as enhancing transparency and boosting data integrity for record keeping purposes," Barnard concludes.

Averda will first pilot the Averda TruTrak system with key clients, and thereafter, the benefits of this automated track and trace system will be made available to the entire market ensuring 100% compliance in the disposal of healthcare risk waste.