

City Solutions - Needle Solutions Team

Description of the Needles in Public Spaces File

The Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) file was created December 2012 to track needles found by anyone reporting a needle find as well as the needles found at Clean Team events. The NIPS info has come from many sources: the TBSC Facebook Page; The Clean Team Facebook Page; Needle Free Zone Facebook Page; emails; Facebook messages; in person; and phone calls.

Logging a Needle Find

People report finds almost daily. When adding a needle find to the log, the following information is added: date of report; date that the needle was found; location w/cross streets; the needle count; what activity was the person doing (e.g. at the beach); if children were nearby (e.g. playground); whether the needle find was near a waterway; and whether there were any sharps containers nearby.

File availability

So that NIPS is available to anyone, the NIPS file is uploaded to the Take Back Santa Cruz Facebook Page on the 8th of the month. It is in PDF format to protect it from tampering. The NIPS file can be found on the Take Back Santa Cruz Facebook page under “files.”

The NIPS file can also be found on the TBSC Website. Select Project > Needle Solutions. The NIPS file can be found above the wording “Submit a Needle Report.” Here is the link:

<http://takebacksantacruz.org/solution-groups/needle-solutions-team/>

What is the difference in the Needle count between the Clean Team File and the NIPS File

There are 2 files that have needle counts: The Clean Team File; and the Needles in Public Spaces File (NIPS):

- The Clean Team file contains the results of the Clean Team events. It notes needles found, trash poundage, and unusual finds during a clean event.
- The Clean Team file of clean events can be found on the Clean Team Facebook page under “files.”
- The Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) file records the needles found by anyone reporting a needle find. It also includes the needles found at Clean Team event. NIPS file does not record any trash poundage, but it does record sharps containers.

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There is also a Google Documents offline photo file that has Clean Team photos and needles in public spaces photos. Read access can be provided upon request.

Needle Find Receipt

When a person submits a needle find through Facebook, a receipt in the form of a report is sent indicating that the needle has been added to the log. Here is a sample report:

Report 279N - The 7 needles and 22 caps found by the Leveelies during a levee clean have been added to the Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) Log. We are up to 1758 needles found in 9 months and 12 days. The photo of the needle in the water has also been captured. Thank you for your report.

When a person submits a needle find through the TBSC website, a receipt in the form of a report is sent. Here is a sample report:

I received a notice from the TBSC website that you found a needle. Thank you for having taken the time to make this report.

Here is your receipt: Report 253N - The 2 needles found on the East Levee near Villamar Way have been added to the Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) Log. We are up to 1463 needles found in 8 months and 2 days. Thank you for your report and for your photo.

Link to Report a Needle via the TBSC Website

Here is the TBSC website link to report a needle find -

<http://takebacksantacruz.org/solution-groups/needle-solutions-team/>

How to Report a Needle Find

Sometimes a person is unclear how to report a find. In that case, I send them the following:

(person's name) You asked how you can tell me about a needle find. You can notify me in either a thread on The Clean Team or the Take Back Santa Cruz FB page or you can message me directly on FB. I record: date needle found, number of needles, location (e.g. on 100 block of National St), location type (park, beach, business area, etc) and if a child was present.

Thanks, in advance, for your report.

How/when to add a Needle Stick to the Report

Sometimes a person will report a needle stick that happened to another person. I will never log a needle stick unless the actual person reports the stick or it is posted in the newspaper. There are 3 reasons to get the information directly from the source: needle sticks can be sensational

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and this often results in here-say threads; we need to respect the person's privacy; and this file needs to foster accurate information.

If I do receive needle stick information and it is not from the source, there are 3 sample possible follow-up response:

- (1) As keeper of the Needle in Public Spaces (NIPS) log, I would like to add the needle stick information you mentioned to the log. I do my best to keep accurate notes as there are folks in the world that would be only too happy to challenge the data. You wrote "I saw on a friend's wall" - Could you have the friend message me via FB with the date and location of the needle stick and whether I can use their name. I appreciate your alerting the (Facebook page name). Thank you.
- (2) Please tell your friend that I am sorry to hear that she had a needle stick. Please have your friend provide me with the needle stick information at janfun002@gmail.com. Please have her provide date of needle stick, location (e.g. on 100 block of National St), location type (park, beach, business, residential, etc), if a child was present, and would it be OK if I used the person's name in the report. The report is sent to the City Council once a month, so at that time it becomes part of public record. Thank you.
- (3) Great that you are willing to continue researching the possibility of adding the data to the Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) Log.

Here is what I typically add to the log:

- date of stick (Note: it can be a general date but it is valuable to know if it was before or after April 30th)
- person's name (this can be "anonymous")
- location (with cross street) (I never mention a business' name)
- location type (residential, business, beach, park, etc)
- what activity (e.g. playing with children, raking leaves)
- did the person need to get medical treatment.

I have read the emails from (person's name) and this is the path that I would like to take.

- Business' name would not be used as it is just not good for business.
- The log will go to the City and County on the 8th of the month.
- The file will be posted to the Take Back Facebook page on the 9th of the month.
- If my data is ever challenged, I may need your support to confirm that I did not artificially inflate or create the data. There are folks that are only too interested stopping our data collection.

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- I have attached the current file simply so you can see a sample.
The report might look like this:
date of stick - June (6/?/13)
person's name - anonymous
location - a cemetery in SC
location type - cemetery/park
what activity - grounds keeping
did the person need to get medical treatment. Yes, Hep C vaccination and test for HIV every 2 months.

(senders name), if you can get the general date of the sticks, the medical treatment (if any), and permission to have the file uploaded to the TBSC Facebook page on the 9th of the month, I would be glad to add the data. I have my fingers crossed . . and thanks!

Posting the NIPS Report to the TBSC Facebook page

The NIPS Report is posted to Facebook once a month. This is done after the report has been sent to the City Council and the Board of Supervisor.

Here are 2 sample Posting paragraphs:

Over the past 9 month, the TBSC Needles Solutions Team has been keeping a log of needles found in public spaces. The count is now 1638 needles found by the public. This month's file has been sent to the Santa Cruz Board of Supervisors and the City Council so that they can remain informed of the ongoing problem. The email cited 2 locations that are proving to be hot spots: (1) near the rail road tracks and the recycling center on Fair Ave (2) A quadrant of Plymouth, Emeline, Button, and Fernside. Additionally, the email noted that citizens found 217 needles this month and 133 needles last month. All, thank you for your "needle find" reports. Look through the 15 pages of "finds." It is pretty amazing. . . and all reported from the public. Keep reporting as your data is vital.

For the past 8 months, the Needles Solutions Team has been keeping a log of needles found in public spaces. The document was created as a reference so that someone can use the data to: (1) Determine if the needles found in public spaces are increasing or decreasing; (2) Give the community a place to log their finds (3) and most importantly to keep the County and City aware that there is ongoing problem.

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Since the new Syringe Services Program, 442 needles have been found in public areas. This averages to 4.5 needles found by the public each day after the new program. Here are the overall counts for the past 8 months from December 8th through August 8th: Total count - 1421 needles; Total number of known needle sticks - 2 people (1 was a child). To keep everyone informed, the file was sent to the City Council and the Board of Supervisors today. Thank you for providing your finds and your photos. The file would have little value without your reports.

Once a Month an email is sent to the City Council and the County Board of Supervisors

The NIPS Report is sent to the City Council and the Board of Supervisors on the 8th of each month. Here is a sample letter.

To: Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors and the Santa Cruz City Council

Please find the Take Back Santa Cruz Needles Solutions Team Needles in Public Spaces (NIPS) monthly report attached. This is a log of citizen reports of needles found in public spaces over the past 9 months. The log was created as a reference so that someone can use the data to:

- (1) To keep the County and City aware that there is ongoing problem;
- (2) Determine if the needles found in public spaces are increasing or decreasing;
- (3) Provide data to the City and County so that "hot spot" patterns can be identified for City/County cleanup; and to
- (4) Give the community a place to log their finds

Increasing NIPS finds

Since the new Syringe Services Program has begun (4/30), 659 needles have been found in public areas. The monthly needle counts are: April 30th - May 8th - 63 (9 days, not a full month), June 8th - 141 needles; July 8th - 105 needles; August 8th - 133 needles; September 8th - 217 needles. We do not know if the needles found on in our community are from the SSP as the SSP needles do not have an identifier.

Hot spot NIPS locations

Though the needle count is not formal, there are 2 locations that are proving to be hot spots:

- Near the rail road tracks and the recycling center on Fair Ave
- A quadrant of Plymouth, Emeline, Button, and Fernside

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Counts

1638 needles found in 9 months

Number of needle sticks - 2 people (1 was a child) Best regards - (sender's name)

What To Tell A Person who want to dispose of a needle

Direct the person to the Santa Cruz Health Site - section "What to do if you find needles in the community?"

<http://www.santacruzhealth.org/phealth/2ssp.htm>

"If you have found syringes in the community, first determine if they are located in a place where they present a threat to public safety. If so, call 911, and the Sheriff's office will be dispatched. If no threat to public safety, please call the Department of Public Works at 454-2160 to report the finding and request removal. If needles are found on private property, please call Environmental Health at 454-2022 to report the finding and request removal."

Contact information if you have questions about the NIPS log

Please contact Analicia Cube via the TBSC Website "contact us" tab