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- Sen. Marcos bats for proper waste disposal as health measure vs. COVID-19 spread

# Sen. Marcos bats for proper waste disposal as health measure vs. COVID-19 spread

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Senator Imee R. Marcos today warned that improper disposal of hospital, laboratory and even household wastes might trigger a resurgence of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the Philippines.



Senator Imee Marcos

(Senate of the Philippines / MANILA BULLETIN)

“Cases of infection seem to have gone down, but the government might be blind-sided if it underestimates the importance of proper waste disposal,” Marcos warned.

Marcos, chairwoman of the Senate economic affairs committee, said an increase in infectious waste from testing labs and hospitals is expected to result from two factors: wider mass testing and the lifting of community quarantines. Both factors have caused a new wave or spike in COVID-19 in other countries.

She urged the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF-EID) to propagate and enforce guidelines and compliance measures for the proper disposal of contaminated lab and hospital supplies such as used test kits, syringes, and personal protective equipment (PPE) like face masks, gloves, gowns, and shoe covers.

“The points of discard also include households because people use and throw away face masks, so the IATF guidelines must cover the general public to the municipal or city level, from segregation to final waste disposal,” Marcos said.

City ordinances regulating plastic use might have to be modified, Marcos added, if a new classification for COVID-19 related waste is adopted and their double-bagging prescribed, as in other countries.

Marcos also called on the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) to strictly enforce the Clean Air Act’s ban on incineration, citing a World Health Organization (WHO) report that developing countries still burn medical waste using poor-quality incinerators without pollution control.

The high plastic content and additives used to make PPE more repellent make them notorious for the amount of toxic dioxin that they produce when burned.

Marcos also alerted the government to the possible entry of hazardous waste related to COVID-19 from other countries, repeating her call in Senate Bill 408 for a total ban on waste imports.

At least three companies being run by foreigners in Subic and Cagayan de Oro in 2019 were importing waste “under the guise of recycling” and should be investigated, she explained.

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