

HEADLINES

Pandemic generates 280 tons of medical waste daily – DENR

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Masks and gloves were found scattered along EDSA on September 28, 2020.

The STAR / Miguel de Guzman, file

MANILA, Philippines — Pandemic times have resulted in the accumulation of an estimated 280 metric tons of medical wastes every day, posing a new problem for the country, the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) said yesterday.

To address this, the DENR will be implementing a health care waste management project in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

Geri Sañez of the DENR-Environmental Management Bureau, said addressing this waste problem is necessary, taking into account that COVID-19 is a serious illness and can cause detrimental effects to human health.

A United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) publication indicated that infectious waste refers to medical waste that “carries pathogenic

microorganisms and has the hazard of leading to the spread of infectious diseases.”

Infectious waste mainly includes articles contaminated by patients’ blood, body fluid or excrement and household garbage generated by isolated infectious patients or suspected infectious patients treated by medical institutions.

At Friday’s launching of the project, UNDP team leader Floradema Eleazar said there is a \$1.076-million (about P53-million) allocation for the Philippines with financing from China’s South-South Cooperation Fund.

The China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA) is co-funding the project which totals \$5 million for five developing countries – the Philippines, Laos, Cambodia, Myanmar and Nepal.

Under the project, two waste treatment facilities will be put up in the Philippines, said Eleazar.

One treatment facility will be put up in cooperation with the Pasig City local government unit (LGU) where several hospitals are run by the government.

“The problem (of medical waste) has reached critical level. The city government does not have the capacity to deal with this infectious waste that has been piling up in the past few months. It is an urgent concern that seeks to be addressed,” said Pasig Mayor Vico Sotto.

Meanwhile, Samuel Sumilang, chief nurse of the Dr. Jose Rodriguez Memorial Hospital and Sanitarium in Tala, Caloocan City, also expressed gratitude for having been chosen as a pilot site for the project.

Eleazar said the waste management project will emulate the success experienced by China in its response to the COVID-19 medical waste problem.

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