



Universal Waste Handling & Disposal Procedures

Universal wastes are hazardous wastes that are more common and pose a lower risk to people and the environment than other hazardous wastes. Federal and State regulations identify universal wastes and provide simplified rules for handling, recycling, and disposing of them.

The following items are classified as universal wastes when they are no longer serviceable, needed, and are to be discarded (NOTE: items that are functional and are sent to surplus are not considered wastes):

- ♣ Mercury Thermostats: These thermostats contain small glass capsules of mercury, a shiny liquid metal, to make electrical contact. (Modern electronic thermostats do not contain mercury.)
- ♣ Batteries: include rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries, silver button batteries, mercury batteries, small sealed lead acid batteries, most alkaline batteries, and carbon-zinc batteries. *NOTE*: Spent automotive-type lead acid storage batteries are not universal waste. They are hazardous wastes.
- ♣ Lamps: Universal waste lamps include fluorescent tubes, high intensity discharge lamps, sodium vapor lamps, and any other lamps that exhibit a characteristic of a hazardous waste.
- ♣ Non-empty Aerosol Cans
- ♣ Mercury Switches: Motor vehicle light switches that contain mercury and non-automotive mercury switches and products that contain them, when they are recycled as scrap metal.
- ♣ Mercury Thermometers including fever thermometers.
- ♣ Pressure or vacuum gauges: Gauges that contain mercury such as U tube manometers, barometers, and blood pressure meters.
- ♣ Dilators and Weighted Tubing: These medical devices contain mercury.
- ♣ Rubber Flooring: Any flooring, such as some gymnasium floors, that contains mercury.
- ♣ Novelties that contains mercury or mercury batteries such as some singing greeting cards, flashing athletic shoes, jewelry, and other devices.
- ♣ Mercury Gas Flow Regulators
- ♣ Counterweights and Dampers including devices that use pouches of high density mercury.
- ♣ Dental Amalgam
- ♣ Consumer Electronic Devices: Electronics that exhibit hazardous characteristics such as some flat panel monitors, cell phones, games consoles, calculators, fax machines, and computers. *NOTE*: These do not include major appliances like washing machines, clothes dryer, hot water heaters, dehumidifier, conventional oven, microwave oven, stove, refrigerator, freezer, air conditioner, and trash compactors.
- ♣ Cathode Ray Tubes: Waste cathode ray tubes (CRT's) such as television picture tubes and non-flat panel computer monitors, are universal wastes with special management standards.

All universal wastes are hazardous wastes and, without the new rules, would have to be managed under the same stringent standards as other hazardous wastes. Universal wastes are collected in one location by EHS. If you generate large amounts EHS will make special arrangements with you for your waste. Storage times allowed are much longer than for normal hazardous wastes, but should never be longer than 270 days (approximately nine months) prior to contacting EHS for disposal.

If you have generated a universal waste it must be contained and labeled. The containers can be nearly anything that will contain the waste and that can be sealed, and labeled. Labels are available from the EHS office at ext. 5126.