

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

Risk Management and Safety Services

Standard Operating Procedure: EHS004-150803

Title: Universal Waste Management

Policy Statement

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 simple rules for handling, recycling, and disposing of them. The regulations, called the “Universal Waste Rule,” are in the California Code of Regulations, title 22, division 4.5, chapter 23 for more information go to: <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/HazardousWaste/UniversalWaste/>

All universal wastes are hazardous wastes and without the new rules, they would have to be managed under the same stringent standards as other hazardous wastes. Also, universal wastes are generated by a wide variety of people rather than by the industrial businesses that primarily generate other hazardous wastes.

Not all waste products of a particular type are hazardous waste and universal waste. For example, waste thermometers that contain mercury are universal wastes but waste thermometers that contain alcohol are neither hazardous waste nor universal waste.

The following items are universal wastes when they are no longer useful or are discarded:

- **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.** Universal waste batteries include rechargeable nickel-cadmium batteries, silver button batteries, mercury batteries, small sealed lead acid batteries (burglar alarm and emergency light batteries), most alkaline batteries, carbon/zinc batteries, and any other batteries that exhibit a characteristic of a hazardous waste.
 - *NOTE: Spent automotive-type lead acid storage batteries are not universal waste. They are hazardous wastes that require management as specified in CCR 22, Div. 4.5, chap. 16, article 7.*
- **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. Broken CFL’s become hazardous waste.
- **Non-empty aerosol cans.** These are universal wastes if they contain an ignitable or toxic propellant or if the contents exhibit any hazardous waste characteristic.

For more information, see our fact sheet “SB1158 Designates Aerosol Cans as “Universal Waste.”

- **Mercury switches.** Two different types of mercury switches are universal wastes:
 - Motor vehicle light switches that contain mercury. Health and Safety Code section 25214.6 designates motor vehicle light switches (automatic hood and trunk light switches) containing mercury as universal wastes once they are removed from vehicles. As of January 2005, vehicles that contain the switches will also be considered hazardous waste until the mercury light switches are removed
 - Non-automotive mercury switches and products that contain them, when they are recycled as scrap metal. These switches include thermostats and tip switches in portable heaters, washing machine out-of-balance switches, silent wall switches, and other mercury-containing switches and products containing them. As of February 9, 2006, all discarded products that contain mercury switches will be universal wastes.
- **Mercury thermometers**, including fever thermometers.
- **Mercury-Added Novelties.** This category includes practical joke items, figurines, jewelry, toys, games, cards, ornaments, yard statues and figures, candles, holiday decorations, and foot-wear that contain mercury or mercury batteries. Effective January 1, 2003, the California Mercury Reduction Act banned sale of mercury-added novelties in this state, but some people still have them in their homes.
- **Pressure or vacuum gauges** that contain mercury such as U tube manometers, barometers, and sphygmomanometers (blood pressure meters.)
- **Dilators and weighted tubing.** These medical devices contain mercury.
- **Rubber flooring that contains mercury.** Older gymnasium floors that were poured in place to form indoor tracks and gymnastic areas frequently contain mercury.
- **Novelties that contain mercury or mercury batteries** such as some singing greeting cards, flashing athletic shoes, jewelry, and other devices. As of January 1, 2004, all novelties with added mercury are considered hazardous and universal wastes.
- **Mercury gas flow regulators.** These older gas flow regulators are managed exclusively by natural gas utilities.
- **Counterweights and dampers**, including devices that use pouches of high density mercury to dampen shaking on hunting bows and snow skis or to absorb recoil on shotguns.
- **Dental amalgam** tooth filling materials including waste amalgam, bits and pieces from chairside traps, and spent wastewater filters.
- **Consumer electronic devices.** Electronics that exhibit hazardous characteristics. Some examples are cell phones, game consoles, computer disc drives, and computers.

- **Cathode ray tubes.** Waste cathode ray tubes (CRTs), such as television picture tubes and nonflat panel computer monitors, are universal wastes with special management standards.
- **Gauges.** Vacuum and pressure gauges that contain mercury, including blood pressure gauges, barometers, and manometers.

To avoid having to comply with storage and management requirements, immediately contact the Sustainability Dept. for a waste pick-up, by submitting a work order-once you have determined you are no longer in need of the material.

- Many items can be disposed of in E-cyclers located around campus. We currently have E-Cyclers located at the following locations:
 - Jolly Giant Commons, 2nd Floor
 - Library, on the exit side of the main entrance
 - University Center South Lounge
 - Entrance to the BSS Forum
 - College Creek Community Center 1st floor

To accumulate Universal Waste in your work area, a person must do all of the following:

- Do not dispose of universal waste to the trash.
- Do not accumulate more than 5,000 kilograms of universal waste at any one time.
- Do not store universal waste for longer than one year after generating or receiving the waste.
- Document the length of time you have accumulated universal waste by labeling it with the accumulation start date.
- Label or mark universal wastes, or containers or packages of universal waste, to identify their types.
- Package in a way to prevent leaks and/or spill and clean up any releases such as leaking batteries or broken fluorescent tubes. Repackage the damaged universal waste and manage it as hazardous waste. Additionally, manage any other materials generated, such as cleanup supplies and contaminated soil, as hazardous wastes if they are identified as hazardous waste.
- Train employees in proper universal waste management including handling, packaging, storing and labeling the universal waste, as well as how to respond to releases.
- Send all universal waste to a facility authorized to collect, recycle or dispose of universal waste.

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