Empty Container Management

SafetyNet #: 124

An empty container that once held hazardous material must be managed in compliance with regulations enforced by the Yolo County Certified Unified Program Agency. Each year thousands of pounds glass and plastic containers that once held hazardous materials are unnecessarily thrown in the campus landfill or shipped off as hazardous waste. In 2006 over 5 tons ended up in landfills. A significant portion of this volume could easily have been diverted from landfills through proper reuse and recycling.

So what should you do with empty containers in your lab?

Determine if the container held an Acutely or Extremely Hazardous Material

A list of acutely and extremely hazardous substances is available here [1].

If a container held an Acutely (AH) or Extremely Hazardous (EH) material you must dispose of it through EH&S. Do not rinse these containers and never throw them into the trash.

Not an AH or EH container? Then determine if the container meets the State of California’s definition of empty

Every container must be completely empty as defined by California before the container itself is no longer hazardous waste. Hazardous Material containers that are not empty must be sent to EH&S as hazardous waste. A container of pourable liquids is defined as empty when nothing can be poured or drained out no matter what orientation the container is held (e.g. tilted, inverted, etc.). If the material is not pourable, the container is empty if no material is encrusted on, or adhered to the inside that can be feasibly removed by physical methods (excluding rinsing). Do not rinse a container unless you are able to collect all the rinsate and complete a waste determination on that rinsate. You might have to manage the rinsate as hazardous waste! Note: Pesticide Containers maybe be rinsed under certain conditions and the rinsate reused. Please contact EH&S for guidance regarding the disposal of any empty pesticide containers.

If the container doesn't meet the definition of empty, then it must be disposed of as hazardous waste. If your container meets the California definition of empty, then its size will determine how to manage and dispose of it.

If the empty container is greater than 5 gallons (18.93L) you must write the date it was emptied on the container. By law, you have one year to either reuse the container or recycle the container through Waste Reduction and Recycling (WRR) [2][*]

If the empty container is equal to or less than 5 gallons you are not required to write the date emptied on the container. You can reuse these containers in your lab, recycle them through WRR [2][*] or deface the label and send them to the Yolo County landfill in the regular trash. (See above regarding the management of empty pesticide containers.)
Please help us reduce the tremendous volume of glass and plastic that ends up in landfills. Please reuse your containers in your lab whenever possible. They often make acceptable hazardous waste containers. If you can’t reuse containers please consider recycling them.

(*) UCD Waste Reduction and Recycling (WWR) will accept many glass or metal containers and plastics marked with a or . Please contact them directly for their recycling acceptance policy.

Need More Information?
For information about recycling on campus, visit the UCD Waste Reduction and Recycling (WWR) website. Also, a fact sheet entitled “Managing Empty Containers” is available from the California Department of Toxic Substances (DTSC).

Contact
Hazardous Waste Management
hazwaste@ucdavis.edu 530-754-5058
FAX: 530-752-4527

More information

External links

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