

Frequently Asked Chemical Disposal Questions

Over the years the Chemical Safety Office has been asked many questions concerning the disposal of various types of contaminants. Usually these questions pertain to the disposal of chemicals or contaminated equipment while others are concerned with clarification as to why certain rules exist. Below you can find answers to several of the questions that we have recently received. This is the first article of a continuing series. We will periodically publish answers to additional questions that we receive in order to address the concerns and needs of our campus community.

1. How do I dispose of pipet tips and lab trash that are minimally contaminated with chemicals?

Lab trash should be segregated from your regular garbage. Bagging lab trash as it is produced is a preferred method of containment. This limits the chemical exposure of laboratory staff. These bagged items can be boxed and placed in the normal trash with an "OK to Trash" sticker. Transferring the marked box directly to the buildings dumpster is a prudent practice to limit handling by custodial staff.

[Additional information on lab trash disposal can be found here....](#)

2. How do I dispose of phenol/chloroform solutions and contaminated items?

Phenol/chloroform solutions can be added to halogenated carboys for disposal. If there are chemicals in a solution that may not be acceptable for carboys they can be transferred into a container that is appropriate for that type of material. **Always** label any container with the contents. Be as detailed as you can. This will help you avoid mixing incompatible chemicals and is also critical for the Chemical Safety Office's classification and disposal of the material.

Phenol/chloroform contaminated items are considered lab trash. Please see lab trash disposal above.

3. How do I dispose of ethidium bromide contaminated items?

Items that have come in contact with ethidium bromide such as gloves, paper towels, sampling tips, and other lightly contaminated lab ware can usually be bagged and placed in the normal trash.

Ethidium bromide mixtures in measurable amounts can be offered for [pick up by Chemical Safety](#).

4. Why shouldn't I label my unwanted chemicals as "waste"?

While you may consider many of your used or unwanted chemicals as "waste" we prefer you do not apply this label. "Waste" has a lot of different meanings and there are important regulatory implications to this word. This is especially true if the waste is categorized as "hazardous" by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Labeling materials as "hazardous waste" requires specific actions to remain in compliance with regulations. The Chemical Waste Management group within the Chemical Safety Office has the responsibility to ensure that materials are disposed of properly and that the University is in compliance with both EPA and state regulations. [More information on chemical disposal regulations can be found here....](#)

If you have questions or concerns regarding the disposal of chemicals contact us at chemsafety@fpm.wisc.edu

March 2013

For More Information Contact:

Environment, Health and Safety Department
30 East Campus Mall, Madison, WI 53715-1227
Phone (608) 265-5000 · **Fax** (608) 262-6767;
The Chemical Safety Office