



Dental Facilities Fact Sheet

for Mercury Source Reduction

- Q.** Why have a Mercury Source Reduction Program?
- A.** The program is the result of a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit issued to the Sacramento Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant (SRWTP). The permit requires Sacramento Regional County Sanitation District (SRCS D) to limit the amount of mercury that is discharged from SRWTP into the Sacramento River.
- Q.** Who is responsible?
- A.** SRCS D has been given the responsibility to implement a Mercury Source Reduction Program. For general questions regarding this program call (916) 875-6470.
- Q.** What is the goal?
- A.** The goal of this program is to reduce mercury within the Sacramento River watershed coming from hospitals, medical/dental facilities, schools, universities and households.
- Q.** Where is mercury found in dental offices?
- A.** Dental amalgam contains approximately 50% mercury and some silver, zinc, copper and tin. Amalgam-containing wastes generated at dental offices include dental amalgam chunks, dental amalgam fines, mixtures containing dental amalgam fines, single use dental amalgam traps that contain dental amalgam, dental amalgam sludge, vacuum pump filters that contain dental amalgam, and extracted teeth with amalgam restorations.
- Q.** Which amalgam waste should be recycled?
- A.** All amalgam-containing waste should be recycled. If not recycled, then it must be disposed of as hazardous waste. The waste should never be rinsed down the drain, thrown in the trash or placed in medical waste (red bags). Mercury may be released from amalgam if it is incinerated or may leach out if it ends up in wastewater.
- Q.** What is the best way to manage amalgam waste?
- A.** Dental amalgam waste meets the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) criteria for inclusion in the California Universal Waste Rule: "...is widely generated, it is recyclable, and non-mercury substitutes are available."
- Q.** What are the requirements for handling amalgam waste under the Universal Waste Rule?
- A.** Every handler of amalgam waste must manage that California universal waste as follows:
1. Place amalgam waste in airtight containers
 2. Label or mark the airtight containers with one of the following phrases: "Universal Waste-Dental Amalgam," "Waste Dental Amalgam" or "Scrap Dental Amalgam"
 3. Maintain a record, in the form of a log, invoice, manifest, bill of lading or other shipping document(s) for at least 3 years along with the following information:
 - Name and address of the universal waste handler, destination facility or foreign destination to whom the waste was sent
 - The quantity of each type of universal waste sent
 - The date the shipment of universal waste left your facility

Reducing mercury, within the Sacramento River watershed, coming from households and businesses such as hospitals, medical and dental facilities

10545 Armstrong Ave.
Suite 101
Mather, CA 95655

For more information
visit our web site at
www.bemercuryfree.net
or call (916) 875-6644

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- Q. What if I don't handle my amalgam waste under the California Universal Waste Rule?
- A. If the amalgam waste is not handled under the California Universal Waste Rule, then it must be disposed of as a hazardous waste. Some of the requirements for disposal as a hazardous waste include:
1. Obtaining an EPA generator ID number
 2. Keeping accurate records of hazardous waste management
 3. Proper labeling and handling, including the words "Hazardous Waste"
 4. Manifesting, transporting and disposing for cradle to grave tracking
 5. Sending the waste to a permitted facility by a certified waste hauler
- Q. What else do I need to know about the proper management of amalgam waste?
- A. *Never rinse traps in the sink!*
Trapped mercury-containing amalgam will go directly to the sewer and wastewater treatment plant, which is not equipped to completely remove mercury before the treated water is returned to the Sacramento River.
Don't put mercury-containing waste in medical waste containers!
Incineration and solid waste disposal can release mercury directly into the environment. Store amalgam containing waste in designated airtight containers. Talk to your waste hauler about specific handling requirements for each mercury-containing waste stream.
Don't place other materials in your mercury waste or recycling containers!
The added volume will cost more and may make recycling or disposal more difficult.
Don't mix waste streams without checking with your waste hauler first!
Mixing may limit recycling and disposal options and result in higher costs.
- Q. Should we be concerned about amalgam particles that are captured in our vacuum system filters and screens?
- A. Amalgam waste from vacuum pump filters and screens should also be recycled as a California universal waste or disposed of as hazardous waste. Using finer screens will prevent more particles from entering the sanitary sewer.
- Check that your high-speed evacuation system is linked to a filter-equipped vacuum system.
Check with your equipment manufacturer to make sure that you are using the smallest available vacuum filter screen without compromising vacuum suction.
Check that your vacuum pumps are equipped with filters; even some dry turbine vacuum systems need filters.
Check to ensure that built-up sludge in air/water separators is cleaned regularly (in dry turbine vacuums only) and recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste!
- Q. Are there ways to further reduce the amount of amalgam going down the drain?
- A. There are supplementary filters, settling devices and amalgam separators that will further reduce amalgam discharges. Standard traps and screens in the vacuum system and cuspidor remove only 50 to 60 percent of waste amalgam, while the remainder passes through and is discharged to the sanitary sewer.
- Q. What about amalgam separator devices?
- A. According to the American Dental Association, advanced separator devices installed in the vacuum system will remove up to 95 percent of waste amalgam. Contact SRCSD at (916) 875-6470 for more information.
- Q. How do I find a service to collect and recycle or dispose amalgam waste?
- A. It is possible that the same contractor who collects your photographic waste will also collect your amalgam waste. If not, SRCSD in cooperation with the Business Environmental Resource Center (BERC), has compiled a list of companies that will accept amalgam waste from Sacramento area dentists. For further information, contact BERC at (916) 649-0225.
- Q. Where can I find the regulatory requirements for managing amalgam waste?
- A. California Code of Regulations, title 22, division 4.5, chapter 23, section 66273 (California Universal Waste Rule)
60 Federal Register 25492 (May 11, 1995) Final Federal Universal Waste Rule
DTSC Fact Sheet - April 2006: Dental, Medical and Veterinary Offices - Managing Your Hazardous Waste
(www.dtsc.ca.gov/InformationResources/upload/DocVet-042606draft.pdf)