Chemical Container Disposal

Empty chemical containers can contain residual amounts of chemicals. In an effort to ensure that this residue is handled properly and to be able to recycle or properly dispose of these containers, the following procedures have been developed.

Chemical containers that have been emptied (drained of their contents by normal methods including pouring, pumping, aspirating, etc.) are not regulated as hazardous waste; however they should not necessarily be disposed of in the regular solid waste dumpsters. Generally, the primary container (the container that actually held the chemical), must be triple rinsed with water or other suitable solvent and air-dried before disposal. For volatile organic solvents (e.g. acetone, ethanol, ethyl acetate, ethyl ether, hexane, methanol, methylene chloride, petroleum ether, toluene, xylene, etc.) that are not on the list of *acutely hazardous wastes*, the emptied container can be air-dried in a ventilated area (i.e. a chemical fume hood) without triple rinsing.

All aspects of this procedure will be performed by laboratory personnel.

Glass Containers
Glass containers must be triple-rinsed with water or other suitable solvent and air-dried to ensure that it is free of liquid or other visible chemical residue. Intact containers (with caps removed) meeting these criteria should be placed in glass recycling receptacles. Caps may be discarded into the regular trash.

If the glass container has visible residue and it is hazardous, the container should be disposed of as medical waste. If the residue is not hazardous, the intact container should be placed in regular lab trash.

Broken glass containers that are free of chemical residue should be placed in broken glass receptacles or placed in a puncture resistant container, such as a rigid plastic container or corrugated cardboard box. The plastic container or box should be sealed and placed in regular laboratory trash.

Metal Containers
Metal containers must be triple-rinsed with water or other suitable solvent and air-dried. If the container is free of hazardous chemical residues, it may be placed in the regular laboratory trash. Otherwise, it should be disposed as medical waste.

Secondary Containers
Containers that were used as over-pack for the primary chemical container may be placed in regular trash or recyclable trash. Any packing materials, such as vermiculite, perlite, clay, styrofoam, etc., may be placed in the regular trash unless it was contaminated with the chemical as a result of container breakage or leakage. Packing materials contaminated with hazardous materials should be disposed of as hazardous waste.

NOTE: The chemical name should be crossed/blacked out prior to discarding all containers.

If you have any questions, please contact Environmental Health & Safety at 942-2180.

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