

## Empty Container Disposal and Recycling

This Fact Sheet describes how to properly dispose of or recycle an unwanted container which previously held a hazardous material. Hazardous materials include laboratory chemicals, paints, solvents, pesticides, aerosols, compressed gas cylinders, and hazardous waste.

To dispose of any of the following empty containers through EH&S, please go to the Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) web site at <http://jwas.ehs.berkeley.edu/hwp> and be prepared to take a one-time training.

**NEVER**  
dispose of the  
following  
containers in the  
trash

### **Hazardous Material Containers Constructed of Absorbent Materials (e.g., Cardboard)**

Containers made of an absorbent material such as cardboard or paper that were in direct contact with a hazardous material or hazardous waste must be disposed of through EH&S.

### **Hazardous Material Containers Larger Than 5 Gallons**

It is illegal to dispose of empty hazardous materials containers that are larger than 5 gallons into the common trash. They must be reused on site, sent back to the distributor or picked up by EH&S for proper management. Reuse an empty container only if the contents previously held will be compatible (same hazard class) with whatever material you add to it. If containers will not be used right away, write "EMPTY" and the date on them. By law, they must be reused or recycled within one year of the date they were emptied. Please be aware that containers may contain vapors that are flammable or toxic so they must continue to be kept closed and stored according to the Safe Storage of Hazardous Materials booklet.

### **Compressed Gas Cylinders**

The cost of disposing of pressurized, compressed gas cylinders can be extremely high. Compressed gas cylinders are legally empty when the pressure inside the cylinder is the same as outside (i.e., atmospheric). The preferred method of discarding empty gas cylinders, including lecture bottles, is to return them to the supplier. This must be arranged with your supplier ahead of time. Otherwise, contact EH&S for guidance.

### **Containers Which Held Extremely Hazardous Materials**

Any container which previously held an extremely hazardous material is strictly regulated and should be picked up by EH&S for disposal. Even rinsing them to remove residues usually requires approval from the Department of Toxic Substances Control.



The following  
empty containers  
may be thrown in  
the trash

A waste, or a material, is acutely or extremely hazardous if it:

- 1) has an acute oral LD<sub>50</sub> less than or equal to 50 mg/kg; or
- 2) has an acute dermal LD<sub>50</sub> less than or equal to 43 mg/kg; or
- 3) has an acute inhalation LC<sub>50</sub> less than or equal to 100 ppm as a gas; or
- 4) has been shown through experience or testing that human exposure to the waste or material may likely result in death, disabling personal injury or serious illness because of the carcinogenicity, high acute or chronic toxicity, bioaccumulative properties, or persistence in the environment of the waste or material; or
- 5) is water-reactive; or
- 6) previously contained a substance listed in Title 22 of the California Code of Regulations (Appendix X).

#### **Liquids and Pourable Materials, 5 Gallons or Less**

A small container that held a pourable hazardous material or hazardous waste is empty when no material can be poured or drained from it at any orientation. The container must not have previously contained an acutely or extremely hazardous material.

#### **Solids and Non-Pourable Materials, 5 Gallons in Capacity or Less**

A small container that held a non-pourable hazardous material, such as sludges or "caked-up" solids, is empty when no material remains in the container that could feasibly be removed by scraping, chipping, or other physical methods. A thin uniform film is considered acceptable. The container must not have previously contained an acutely or extremely hazardous material.

#### **Pesticide Containers, 5 Gallons in Capacity or Less**

Small, empty pesticide containers may be discarded in the common trash if they are non-absorbent, triple-rinsed, and the rinseate is used on site. If the rinseate cannot be used on site, dispose of the entire container through EH&S.

#### **Aerosol Containers (e.g., Spray Paint)**

Aerosol containers may be disposed of in the common trash if they are completely empty of product and propellant and did not previously contain an acutely or extremely hazardous material. Containers that still contain any amount of product or propellant must be disposed of through EH&S. Similarly, containers with damaged nozzles must be treated as hazardous waste for disposal.

Check MSDS or call EH&S for help with identifying extremely hazardous materials.

EH&S recommends that you deface hazardous materials markings on the container, and write "empty" on the container, before placing into the trash.

