Washington State
Department of Ecology
Hazardous Waste and
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DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY
State of Washington

# What is a Small Quantity Generator?

## Your Regulatory Status Under the Dangerous Waste Regulations

The Dangerous Waste Regulations, Chapter 173-303 WAC, uses the term **small quantity generator** to describe individuals and businesses that generate (produce) and/or accumulate (store) dangerous waste in small amounts. These generators are "conditionally exempt" from many state regulatory requirements, as long as they follow the basic requirements.

This brochure offers an overview of the standards that apply to small quantity generators. It also lists resources that can offer help. Small quantity generators can get technical assistance through their local health departments, local solid waste programs, and the Washington Department of Ecology (Ecology).

You may be able to avoid generating dangerous waste altogether by following the advice offered by these programs. Or you may find disposal options you were not aware of before.



## How do I know if I generate dangerous waste?

Activities that may generate dangerous waste include auto body repair, printing, dry cleaning, dentistry, and medical care. Many wastes contain certain chemicals or have properties that make them dangerous to human health and the environment. The Dangerous Waste Regulations describe a process called "designation" that determines whether a waste is dangerous. Wastes are categorized based on the characteristics or criteria they exhibit, or if they are found on a specific list in the Dangerous Waste Regulations.

For example, a waste could have the characteristic of being corrosive, meaning that it eats through metal and skin. This property makes the waste designate as hazardous. Or a waste could contain a certain level of heavy metal – such as lead – that makes the waste designate because it meets the criteria for toxicity. Spent toluene solvent appears on a list of wastes identified as being dangerous waste. Products such as some batteries and cleaners can also designate as dangerous wastes when discarded.

Ecology's Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction website has more information on how to designate a waste. See *Manage Dangerous Waste* at www.ecy.wa.gov/ programs/ hwtr/managewaste.html.



## How much waste can I generate?

A small quantity generator can generate up to 220 pounds of dangerous waste, or up to 2.2 pounds of certain pesticides or poisons, each month. You may generate dangerous waste:

- When you take a byproduct or waste of a process and put it in a container for disposal;
- When you decide a chemical product is no longer usable;
- When you clean up a spilled chemical product; or
- When you clean equipment with a chemical-based cleaner.

## How much waste can I keep on-site?

Small quantity generators can accumulate up to 2,200 pounds of dangerous waste, or 2.2 pounds of certain pesticides or poisons, at their site before sending the waste off-site for proper disposal or recycling. For example, 2,200 pounds of a liquid waste that is about as heavy as water would equal about five 55-gallon drums.

If properly recycled, substances such as spent antifreeze and used oil do not count toward the 2,200-pound limit.

## How does Ecology regulate Small Quantity Generators?

In Washington, the Dangerous Waste Regulations spell out the rules that apply to dangerous waste generators. The rules identify generators as small, medium, or large quantity generators depending on the amount of waste they generate in each month and the amount of waste they accumulate on site. Generators must comply with requirements that are more stringent when they generate or accumulate larger amounts of dangerous waste.

Ecology provides pollution prevention and compliance assistance to all generators, and fully regulates medium and large quantity generators. Local health departments, local solid waste programs, and sewage treatment works offer assistance too, and may regulate the activities of small quantity generators. Local governments sometimes team up with Ecology to provide assistance to small quantity generators.

Small quantity generators are exempt from most of the state and federal regulations. To gain that exemption, they must stay within the legal generation and accumulation limits AND they must:

- Determine if their waste is a dangerous waste ("designation").
- Manage their waste in a way that does not pose a threat to human health or the environment.



- Treat or dispose of their waste:
  - In a permitted or authorized on-site facility;
  - In a permitted or authorized off-site facility;
  - By sending to a legitimate recycler; or
  - By sending to a county moderate risk waste facility.

While small quantity generators that follow the requirements are exempt from most state dangerous waste regulations, other agencies could have requirements or ordinances a generator must follow. Be sure to check with your local health and fire departments for their requirements.

## Best Management Practices for Small Quantity Generators

Follow these Best Management Practices to avoid spills, prevent pollution, and protect the health and safety of your employees, your community, and the environment.

- Keep wastes in containers that are in good condition.
- Label the containers with their contents and with any major risks the waste poses to employees, emergency response personnel, and the public.
- Keep containers closed, except when adding or removing waste.
- Maintain containers so they do not rupture or tip over when you open, handle, or store them.



- Use secondary containment, such as a tub or other receptacle, for containers of liquid waste.
- Keep volumes of accumulated waste low by properly recycling and routinely disposing of waste.
- Inspect storage areas frequently.
- Find out about using alternative, less hazardous products.

## Special Help for Small Quantity Generators

Talk to your local health department to see if they help small quantity generators of dangerous waste. Many local health departments and solid waste programs offer websites, brochures, workshops, on-site consultations, or waste management services.

Ecology's website and publications can answer your questions and help you manage your waste better. We may have information specific to your type of business.

Visit the Hazardous Waste and Toxics Reduction web site at www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/. You can find updates on rule changes, enforcement actions, and other information you may need.

Ecology's FREE *Shoptalk Online* newsletter offers the latest information on waste reduction and safe waste management. You can subscribe to the newsletter through Ecology's listserve.



Go to www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/shoptalkonline. Click on the Subscribe/Unsubscribe box and follow the instructions.

Need help? Unsure where to start? Call an Ecology regional office near you.

**Northwest Regional Office – Bellevue**
3190 160th Avenue SE
Bellevue WA 98008-5452
425-649-7000

**Southwest Regional Office – Lacey**
300 Desmond Drive
Lacey WA 98503
360-407-6300

**Central Regional Office – Yakima**
15 West Yakima Avenue Suite 200
Yakima WA 98902-3401
509-575-2490

**Eastern Regional Office – Spokane**
4601 North Monroe Street
Spokane WA 99205-1295
509-329-3400

### Find more help at:

**Regulatory Information and Assistance**
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/reg_comp_guide/index.html

**Training Materials**
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/workshops/index.html

**Common Dangerous Materials**
www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/dangermat/index.html