

Regulations Response Update: Hidden Hazardous Wastes

Gwendolyn McDay, Emerald Environmental, Inc.

Did you know that if your renovation or demolition project generates over 5,000 kg of obsolete computers, spent batteries, expired pesticides and burnt-out bulbs, the Ohio EPA considers you a generator of hazardous waste? Your site is subject to hazardous waste rules if you accumulate waste lamps, ballasts, suspended pesticides, batteries, mercury-containing thermostats, computers and other electrical components. As we all know, proper disposal of hazardous wastes can be surprisingly costly and complicated. There is good news, however. You or a trusted waste services provider, such as Emerald Environmental Services, Inc., can choose to manage specific materials as Universal Waste (UW) under Ohio's Universal Waste Rules (UWR), and dispose of these hidden hazards as simply, safely, and inexpensively as possible.

Due to demonstrated toxicity characteristics, Universal Wastes, which include pesticides that have been suspended or recalled either voluntarily or under FIFRA (Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act), are considered hazardous wastes when disposed. In order to encourage recycling, the Ohio EPA regulates UW differently than other hazardous wastes. As a result, Universal Waste guidelines provide an option that avoids the high costs and tracking hassles associated with most hazardous waste materials. There are three categories of UW management: handlers, transporters, and destination facilities. All three levels must adhere to the UWR outlined in Ohio Administration Code Chapter (OAC) 3745-273. Transporters move UW without alteration from one handler to another, or to UW destination facilities. Transporters must comply with all applicable DOT regulations, be properly trained, respond to releases, and can only store wastes for 10 days or less. Destination facilities treat, recycle, and dispose of Universal Wastes. These professionals are subject to stringent regulations, and the facility must have a hazardous waste installation and operation permit if UW is stored on site.

As a Universal Waste generator, you are a UW handler. Emerald Environmental Services, Inc. could serve as the expert handler for you, as could any persons or facilities accepting and storing UW without a storage permit (permissible under UWR). Small quantity handlers accumulate less than 5,000 kg (11,023 pounds) of Universal Wastes. Large quantity handlers are responsible for amounts greater than 5,000 kg and must notify the Ohio EPA in writing, obtain an EPA Identification Number, retain shipment receipts, and be trained. Handling materials as Universal Waste means that you do not count UW when determining quantities for hazardous waste generator levels, and thus these potentially hidden hazards are excluded from stringent hazardous waste rules.

You or the company handling your waste needs are permitted certain activities in Universal Wastes management. Lamp bulbs or tubes controlled as UW cannot be crushed until arrival at a permitted destination facility. OAC hazardous waste tank standards apply to pesticides stored in these containers. Handlers can remove mercury-containing ampules from thermostats, as long as the process prevents breakage and is done over a containment vessel in a well-ventilated and monitored area meeting OSHA specifications. Handlers are required to be familiar with waste mercury handling and emergency procedures, and a clean-up system with non-leaking containment devices should be immediately available. Discarded batteries may be sorted or mixed, discharged or regenerated. Disassembly of products and battery packs for individual battery separation is permitted, and electrolyte may be removed. However, all battery management wastes should be evaluated to resolve whether the material does not qualify as UW and must be treated as a regular hazardous waste. Universal Wastes are to be handled without breakage and packaged in secure and compatible containers that are clearly labeled with the contents and the earliest date the materials became wastes or were received. Handlers can store UW on site for up to one year.

Almost all commercial facilities have hazardous materials on site that should be managed as Universal Waste when discarded. A demolition project could easily put you in the large quantity handler category given the number of bulbs, batteries, and old computer equipment needing to be removed. A facility obtaining a hazardous waste permit as a

large handler is subject to complicated corrective action, closure and financial assurance constraints. Even small quantity generators may not want to wade through the UW regulations and handling procedures in order to avoid the costs of greater hazardous waste generator status.

Emerald Environmental Services, Inc. has helped many companies investigate, inventory, and save money on hazardous waste disposal - without the hassle. Founded in 1994, Emerald first focused on environmental, industrial hygiene, and occupational safety consulting. Co-owners Brian Grimm and Scott Hershberger soon recognized their company's waste management expertise would serve small businesses intimidated by environmental codes and larger firms or institutions with big jobs to tackle. In response, Emerald created a Services branch to provide hazardous and non-hazardous transportation and management. As a solutions-oriented company, Emerald conducts inspections of properties to identify environmental concerns and Universal Waste opportunities, develops a complete remediation strategy, and then cost-effectively implements the plan. Emerald Environmental can help you with your unique waste management needs and, when hazardous materials are involved, make sure you take advantage of the maximum Universal Waste savings.