

## Hazardous Waste Factsheet

*“Waste solvents should never be disposed of through evaporation; this practice not only violates air emissions regulations, but also endangers employees and customers.”*

# Commercial Printing

## The Problem

Commercial printing operations can generate a wide variety of hazardous wastes, which typically include spent photographic chemicals, waste inks, waste solvents, contaminated shop towels, and other wastes resulting from equipment cleaning. Additional wastes or unused chemicals such as fountain solution, activators, adhesives, or even lubricating oils may also be classified as hazardous.

These types of wastes may contain chemicals that are flammable (petroleum-based solvents), toxic (fountain solution), or reactive (plate developers with cyanide). Other inks and solvents may contain chlorinated compounds or heavy metals, which are particularly harmful, since they do not readily break down and may persist in the environment.

## Regulatory Requirements

Businesses that are considered small quantity waste generators (SQGs) are regulated by the Thurston County Nonpoint Source Pollution Ordinance (Article VI of the Sanitary Code). Specifically, SQGs are defined by the following:

- 1) Generates less than 220 pounds (about 27 gallons) of hazardous waste per month or batch, or
- 2) Generate less than 2.2 pounds of extremely hazardous waste (cyanide and other acute toxics), or
- 3) Stores no more than 2,000 pounds (about five 55-gallon drums) of hazardous waste at any given time.

Section 4.1(a) of the Sanitary Code requires that all hazardous waste produced by SQGs be properly disposed or recycled. Additionally, Section 4.1(b) requires that all hazardous materials be stored in such a manner as to prevent spills from entering the environment.

## Guidelines for Managing Common Printing Wastes

**Contaminated Rags:** Cloth rags that are sent to a permitted industrial laundry service are not considered hazardous if they have absorbed only minimal amounts of ink and solvent from cleaning. However, heavily saturated rags may be determined to be hazardous waste and may be refused by your cleaning service. Rags that are saturated with hazardous waste may not be disposed in the garbage

Thurston County Public  
Health and Social Services  
Environmental Health Division

412 Lilly Rd. NE  
Olympia, WA 98506-5132  
Hazardous Waste Hotline:  
360-867-2664

TDD Line: 360-867-2603

<http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html>



and must be sent to a hazardous waste vendor. To prevent over-saturating rags with cleaning solvent, consider using dispenser pumps instead of pouring product from the jug. For more information, see our fact sheet “Managing Used Shop Towels and Contaminated Absorbent Materials.”

**Waste Inks:** Inks containing petroleum distillates or heavy metals must be managed as a hazardous waste. To reduce the amount of waste, consider recycling lighter colored inks back into dark inks or use water-based products.

**Spent Solvent and Ink Sludge:** Spent solvent and ink sludge collected during cleaning processes must be disposed as hazardous waste. Waste solvents should never be disposed of through evaporation; this practice not only violates air emissions regulations, but also endangers employees and customers. Additionally, solvents should never be disposed by pouring into waste rag collection bins.

**Spent Photo Fixer:** Fixer is considered a hazardous waste because it contains high amounts of silver. Wastewater containing fixer must be treated on site or sent to an approved vendor for disposal. For additional information, see our fact sheet for “Photo Processing”

## Hazardous Waste Management Options

The hazardous waste you generate must be recycled, treated on site, or managed by a permitted hazardous waste disposal vendor. Regulated hazardous waste must never be disposed into the municipal sewer system, on-site septic systems, storm drains, or onto the ground. If you generate larger volumes of waste, it may be cost effective to recycle some of your waste onsite. For example, silver fixer and spent solvent may be recycled on site using specialized equipment. Otherwise, the following vendors offer disposal services for many type of hazardous waste:

NAME	PHONE NUMBER
Emerald Services (Seattle, WA)	(888) 832-3008
Envirotech Systems, Inc. (Lynwood, WA)	(800) 369-3878
Veolia Environmental Services (Kent, WA)	(206) 790-1890
Philip Services Corporation (Kent, WA)	(253) 872-8030
Safety-Kleen (Auburn, WA)	(253) 939-2022
Thurston County HazoHouse	(360) 867-2491

## More Resources

Additional information can be found through the following web links:

- Printers National Environmental Assistance Center - <http://www.pneac.org/>
- WA Department of Ecology - <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/p2/sectors/print1.html>  
- Search site for “printers”

If you have additional questions or need further guidance on managing your commercial printing waste, please contact the Business Pollution Prevention Program at (360) 867-2664 or TDD (360) 867-2603 Monday through Friday during regular business hours.