

Hazardous Waste Factsheet

Solvents and Parts Cleaners

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The Problem

Most organic solvents are hazardous because they are flammable or can cause harm if they are inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin. Short-term exposure to many solvents can affect the brain and nervous system; long-term exposure can cause permanent physical damage. Many solvents contribute to smog formation when they evaporate into the air. Certain solvents, specifically chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and some chlorinated solvents, are especially harmful to human health and the environment.

Solvents discharged into surface water can harm aquatic organisms, and solvents poured on the ground or into septic tanks can easily pollute ground water, ruining its use as drinking water. In Thurston County, solvents have contaminated a number of large municipal wells and small private wells.

Water-based (or aqueous) parts cleaning solutions can also be hazardous because the detergent is often very caustic. These solutions usually pick up metals, oils, and dirt during the cleaning process that can make them even more hazardous. These wastes can also cause harm if they are discharged into the sanitary sewer or a septic tank, put down a storm drain, dumped on the ground, or poured directly into a lake, stream, or Puget Sound. A fact sheet on aqueous parts washing is available.

The Regulatory Requirements

The Thurston County Nonpoint Source Pollution Ordinance, which went into effect May 9, 1993, requires that hazardous waste be disposed of either by recycling or through a permitted hazardous waste management facility. This requirement applies to waste solvents. Disposal of waste solvents in the garbage, down the drain, on the ground, or by mixing with used oil is prohibited.

Small quantity hazardous waste generators (SQGs) operating in Thurston County are subject to the requirements of this ordinance. Businesses classified as SQGs generate less than 220 pounds of hazardous waste per month. SQGs are exempt from the oversight by the Department of Ecology only if they manage all of their hazardous wastes properly.

Thurston County Public
Health and Social Services
Environmental Health Division

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Hazardous Waste Hotline:
360-867-2664

TDD Line: 360-867-2603

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



The Options

Small quantity generators can satisfy the requirements of the Nonpoint Source Pollution Ordinance by managing their waste solvents through one of the following options:

1. Some waste solvents can be distilled on-site and reused. The resulting sludge and filters from this process must be managed as a hazardous waste. For more details, contact the Thurston County Business Pollution Program at (360) 754-4111.
2. Send your waste solvent off-site to be recycled. Thurston County's HazoHouse can accept small quantities of waste solvent from qualified small quantity generators in Thurston County.

For businesses with larger quantities of solvents, or on-site parts washing units to maintain, using a vendor is the best option. The following is a partial list of companies that provide waste solvent pick-up, recycling, and/or disposal for local businesses. This information was obtained from the Department of Ecology's Hazardous Waste Services Directory, available at

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/apps/hwtr/hwsd/default.htm>

Vendor Name	Phone Number
Emerald Services (western WA)	888-832-3008
Clean Harbors Env. Services (western WA)	206-429-9100
Philip Services (Kent, WA)	800-882-9785
Phoenix Environmental (Tacoma, WA)	888-475-0116
Safety-Kleen (Auburn, WA)	253-939-2022
Thermo Fluids (Sumner, WA)	253-863-3310

Remember, you are liable for any harm caused by the waste solvent you generate until it is properly recycled, reprocessed or burned. Therefore, be selective when choosing a business to manage your waste solvent. Some questions to ask a business that you are considering hiring to manage your waste solvent:

1. Can they provide the names and phone numbers of current customers as references?
2. What type of insurance do they have?
3. Where will your wastes go?
4. What documentation is provided? (At a minimum, you should request a signed receipt for every shipment.)

Additional Information

Many businesses have begun to look at ways to cut down on the amount and toxicity of solvents they use. Many product suppliers now sell less-toxic alternatives to traditional solvents. Hazardous waste specialists recommend using the least-toxic solvent that accomplishes the required cleaning work. This may require trying some different options, or talking with other businesses about alternatives that have worked in their shops or facilities.

Many businesses also sell or lease re-circulating solvent systems that can reduce solvent evaporation, and therefore reducing on air pollution and worker exposure. Others distill their spent solvent and reuse it to reduce their wastes.

Specialists from the Business Pollution Prevention Program are available to answer questions about best management practices for waste solvents, vendors of equipment or services, and ways to calculate pollution prevention costs. Contact us at 867-2664 or TDD 867-2603, Monday - Friday during regular business hours. Other waste management fact sheets available from our website: www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html

