



## Dental Wastes

The "Rules and Standards for Hazardous Waste" (IDAPA 58.01.05) require owners and operators of facilities that generate waste to determine if wastes are hazardous and manage them accordingly. Wastes commonly generated in dental offices include amalgam particles, waste mercury, fixers, developers, x-ray film packets, and chemiclave chemicals. Many of these are hazardous wastes and are subject to special disposal requirements.

### Specific Waste

#### *Amalgam*

Dental amalgam is a hazardous waste due to its mercury and silver content. Amalgam cannot be mixed with biomedical waste because if incinerated, mercury is released into the air. Waste amalgam must be sent to a mercury reclaimer or a hazardous waste management company.

#### *Elemental Mercury*

Mercury may be found in dental offices for use in amalgam. Mercury is a toxic hazardous waste and should be handled with care. Waste mercury should be disposed of through a licensed mercury reclaimer or hazardous waste management company.

#### *X-ray Fixer*

Used x-ray fixer is a hazardous waste due to its high silver content. The fixer should not be mixed with developer or disposed of down the drain; instead, send it to a silver reclaimer or hazardous waste management company. Some film companies or photo processing centers will accept the used chemicals for recycling. Another option is to install a silver recovery unit. Check with your vendor or distributor for more information.

#### *X-ray Film*

Used and unused x-ray film contains silver that should be recycled if no longer needed. Many film suppliers offer recycling programs and may accept unused film. Check with your supplier for more information. If the film cannot be recycled, dispose of the film through a hazardous waste management company.

## ***Lead Foil Packets***

Film packets contain lead, a hazardous waste that should be disposed of through a metal recycler or as hazardous waste. Many film suppliers accept used foil packets or check with local recycling companies. Suppliers may be willing to work with dentists to recover lead from foil packets or lead aprons.

## ***Sterilant Solutions***

Depending on the concentrations or ingredients, many chemical disinfectant solutions may be classified as hazardous waste. Lab tests, Safety Data Sheets, and vendor information may help in determining the hazardous nature of these wastes. Never discharge sterilant solutions into septic systems, and check with the local wastewater treatment plant to determine if your chemiclave may be disposed of into the sewer system. Consider switching to autoclave or a less toxic solution.

## **Recycling and Waste Management Options for Idaho Dentists**

### ***Environmental Consultants and Hazardous Waste Transporters***

Many hazardous waste management companies offer services to dental offices for common types of wastes including amalgam, mercury, chemicals, and lead. Most offer pick-up services throughout the state. Idaho's hazardous waste rules require a comprehensive hazardous waste management system to ensure proper handling from the point of generation through disposal. See our web page, [Hazardous Waste in Idaho](#), for a list of environmental consultants and fact sheet on selecting or hiring consultant to manage wastes generated.

### ***Mail Services***

Most of mail service companies provide containers, shipping, and recycling services as well as packaging requirements and shipping instructions. Contact them for rates and procedures.

## **Additional Information**

Fact sheets and guidance documents available at DEQ's website:

<https://www2.deq.idaho.gov/admin/LEIA/index.html?view=folder&id=2514>

- [Idaho Hazardous Waste Generator Requirements Summary](#)
- [Choosing an Environmental Consultant](#)
- [Hazardous Waste and Used Oil Transporter Directory](#)
- [Example Hazardous Waste Pharmaceuticals](#)

For specific questions, contact your DEQ regional office:

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|------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| • Boise:         | (208) 373-0550 | • Lewiston:   | (208) 799-4370 |
| • Coeur d'Alene: | (208) 769-1422 | • Pocatello:  | (208) 236-6160 |
| • Idaho Falls:   | (208) 528-2650 | • Twin Falls: | (208) 736-2190 |