

Drug Waste Management - The Straight Dope

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<http://www.govlink.org/hazwaste/>

With a few exceptions (mostly large hospitals, pharmacies and those using chemotherapy drugs), the health care industry has been unaware of its responsibility to meet both federal and state hazardous waste regulations. Lacking clear guidance and proper disposal options, individuals within the industry have come up with a variety of creative methods to manage drug wastes. These include drains, bins, biohazard containers, trash cans, and linens.

Outside of the regulation of controlled substances by the Drug Enforcement Administration, no checks exist in the system. Aware of the importance of preventing the diversion of narcotics and other controlled substances, the industry destroys them immediately (usually down the drain). There is similar awareness about the importance of managing biohazardous waste to prevent the spread of infection. These waste handling methods are often applied to waste pharmaceuticals as well, resulting in the improper management of both federal and state wastes.

The health care industry itself, through the Medical Industry Roundtable, requested that the Interagency Regulatory Analysis Committee Pharmaceuticals Workgroup be formed to help find ways to manage a problematical waste stream. Through the efforts of the workgroup, multiple agencies with regulations affecting pharmaceutical management collaborated to identify problems, suggest beneficial changes to regulations and develop best management practices (BMPs).

Several resources were completed to fill information gaps: a bibliography and literature review summary, Pharmaceutical Waste Survey, Pharmaceutical Reverse Distributor Survey and Resource Directory. Washington's Department of Ecology finalized a conditional exclusion for state-regulated drug wastes and published BMPs.

Pharmaceutical Publications from King County (see "Medical/Health Care")

<http://apps01.metrokc.gov/govlink/hazwaste/publications/index.cfm>

Medical Industry Roundtable

<http://www.pprc.org/mirt/>

EPA Innovation Pilot

http://www.epa.gov/oswer/iwg/innovation_pilots_waste.htm#expandingpharmaceutical

A Guide on Hazardous Waste Management for Florida's Pharmacies

http://www.floridacenter.org/brochures_bulletins/rcra_pharmacies.pdf

Managing Pharmaceutical Waste, Ecology's BMPs

<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/hwtr/pharmaceuticals/index.html>

Interagency Regulatory Analysis Committee

<http://www6.metrokc.gov/hazwaste/irac/index.html>