



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
BUREAU OF MATERIALS MANAGEMENT AND
COMPLIANCE ASSURANCE
WASTE ENGINEERING & ENFORCEMENT DIVISION

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www.ct.gov/deep/hazardouswaste

INDUSTRIAL RAG HANDLING

Are Industrial Rags Hazardous Waste?

Industrial rags (also called wipes or wipers) are used for general equipment cleaning and to clean oil, grease and dirt from parts. These include rags that are used once and discarded, as well as rags that are leased and sent back for cleaning and reuse.

Whether used rags and wipers are considered a hazardous waste under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (“RCRA”) depends on the type of residues left on the wipe or rag after use. As with any other waste, it is up to the generator to determine the regulatory status of each waste generated and manage it appropriately. Refer to the DEEP fact sheet [“Hazardous Waste Determinations/Knowledge of Process”](#) on the DEEP website.

Rags or wipers that are contaminated with non-hazardous chemical residues such as paints, solvents, inks, oils, etc. are regulated as non-hazardous “Connecticut Regulated Waste” and may not be thrown in the regular trash. For more information on these types of wastes, see the DEEP fact sheet [“Non-RCRA-Hazardous Waste/Connecticut Regulated Waste”](#) on the DEEP website.

How Should I Manage Disposable Rags and Wipers?

Used rags and wipers destined for disposal may be a RCRA hazardous waste if they contain residues that are a RCRA hazardous waste such as solvents or toxic metals. To determine if your disposable rags or wipers are hazardous waste, see the DEEP fact sheet [“Hazardous Waste Determinations/Knowledge of Process”](#) referenced above. Disposable rags and wipers that are determined to be a RCRA hazardous waste must be managed in the same manner as any other RCRA hazardous waste. Guidance on the proper management of hazardous waste is available on the DEEP website at www.ct.gov/deep/hazardouswaste, or by calling DEEP at the Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance Line at (888) 424-4193.

If disposable rags and wipers are determined not to be hazardous waste, they must be managed as a Connecticut Regulated Waste. As such, they may not be disposed of in the regular trash. Connecticut regulated wastes may only be treated or disposed of at a facility permitted by the DEEP under the Connecticut General Statutes Section 22a-454. As with other wastes you generate, you retain liability for environmental contamination caused by used rags.

How Should I Manage Leased Rags?

Leased rags which are not saturated (i.e., do not contain free liquids), are laundered, and are reused may be sent to an industrial laundry for cleaning. If you determine that your leased rags are not a hazardous waste they do not have to be managed as a hazardous waste. If you determine your leased rags are a hazardous waste they must be managed as a hazardous waste until they are picked up for laundering. However, leased rags do not require a hazardous waste manifest or permitted transporter when shipped to the laundry facility.

The laundry facility is required to have a DEEP wastewater discharge permit allowing it to discharge the wastewater from laundering industrial rags. The permit sets limits on the discharge of solvents and other chemicals coming from the laundry. For this reason your laundry service may require you to limit the solvent and other chemical content of the soiled rags.

If you contract with an industrial laundry to supply you with leased rags, it is recommended that you have the laundry certify to you that they hold the appropriate licenses and/or permits for the processes they have and that they are in compliance with the permit conditions. For a list of facilities that have valid discharge permits and their compliance status with the permit conditions call the DEEP at (860) 424-3023 and ask for the “engineer of the day.”

How May I Reduce Shop Rag Contaminants?

It is important to minimize contamination of rags, because doing so will: (1) reduce health risks to workers; (2) reduce emissions of volatile organic compounds to the air; (3) improve effluent discharge from industrial laundries; (4) decrease liability risks; and, (5) save you money by eliminating excessive solvent use. Consider the following measures to reduce contaminants:

Reduce

- Scrape excess dirt and grime from parts before using solvents and rags.
- Reduce the need for cleaning. How clean is clean enough for your process?
- Reduce the amount of solvent used in cleaning through improved work practices.
- Install a filter in your parts washer to extend solution life.

Substitute

- Use safer cleaners such as water-based cleaners wherever possible. Only use solvents when absolutely necessary.

Recycle

- Remove excess solvent from rags by wringing or in a press. Collect spent solvent for recycling.
- Solvent recycling measures may require a DEEP permit or recycling registration. Before purchasing recycling equipment, check with the DEEP for applicable environmental requirements by calling the Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance Line at (888) 424-4193. You are also advised to check with OSHA and your local fire codes for ventilation and electrical requirements when considering the purchase of recycling equipment.

For more detailed information on reducing, substituting, and recycling solvents, see the DEEP's pollution prevention web page at www.ct.gov/deep/p2.

Where May I Get More Information?

Much more information is available on the DEEP's hazardous waste web page, www.ct.gov/deep/hazardouswaste.

Here are some documents that may be of particular interest to generators of used rags and wipers:

[RCRA Help!](#) This web page is intended for people that are new to hazardous waste requirements, and that need help getting started. This page walks you through the process of determining which of your wastes are hazardous, and how your waste must be managed.

[Determining Hazardous Waste Generator Category](#) This fact sheet guides hazardous waste generators through the process of determining which hazardous waste requirements that apply to them.

[Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generator \(CESQG\) Handbook](#) This document provides complete information on the requirements that apply to the smallest category of hazardous waste generators (i.e., under 220 pounds of hazardous waste per month).

[Small Quantity Generator \(SQG\) Handbook](#) This document provides complete information on the requirements that apply to the next-highest category of hazardous waste generators (i.e., between 220 and 2200 pounds of hazardous waste per month).

[Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance \("COMPASS"\) Program](#) This web page provides information about DEEP's COMPASS program, including information on how to get a free compliance audit for your facility.

[Proper Management of Used Oil](#) See in particular Used Oil Fact Sheet #4, "Materials Containing or Otherwise Contaminated with Used Oil," for information on the proper management of rags that are contaminated with used oil.

If you have specific questions about hazardous waste requirements, you may also call DEEP's Hazardous Waste Compliance Assistance Hotline at (888) 424-4193.

This fact sheet is provided solely as a helpful source of information on pollution prevention and environmental regulations. It does not constitute legal advice, and should not substitute for review of the actual regulations.



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