

Hazardous Waste Regulatory Inspections



The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) are responsible for protecting our environment and ensuring compliance with environmental and hazardous waste regulations. Without the oversight and enforcement provided by these agencies, our natural resources — water, land, and air — would be at greater risk of environmental harm.

Following environmental regulations is essential to reducing the impacts of climate change and protecting our communities, and regular inspections ensure hazardous waste is properly stored, managed, and disposed of in laboratories and other facilities.



Inspection Readiness

Inspections by agencies such as the EPA and NYSDEC can occur with little to no notice, making it essential that laboratories maintain inspection readiness at all times. Failure to do so may result in significant fines and environmental risks. Being inspection-ready ensures hazardous waste is properly managed, regulatory requirements are met, and the risk of violations and unsafe conditions is minimized.

Fun FAQ!

Every year, DEC releases approximately 900,000 pounds of fish into more than 1,200 public streams, rivers, lakes and ponds across the state.

What to Expect

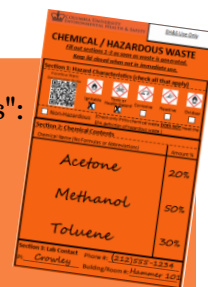
When an inspector arrives, they will look for evidence of proper hazardous waste management and evaluate the overall housekeeping and compliance practices within the laboratory. Common violations inspectors find are: unlabeled hazardous waste containers, open lids on waste containers, and mismanagement of universal waste (batteries, used lamps, aerosols, mercury containing equipment, pesticides).

Fundament-L's

Effective hazardous waste management relies on a framework known as the "Fundament-L's":

- **CoLLect** all unwanted chemicals and hazardous waste in designated containers. Never dispose of hazardous waste down the drain.
- Keep the **Lid** securely closed at all times, except when actively adding waste.
- Conduct regular inspections to identify and prevent **Leaks**.
- **Locate** waste containers at or near the point of generation; do not move them outside the room.
- Ensure containers are properly **Labeled** as soon as waste collection begins. Labels must include the full names of all waste components (no abbreviations or chemical formulas), and all applicable hazardous characteristics must be indicated.

For additional guidance, more information is available via the resources in the QR code below.



Have more questions? Reach out to EH&S at Labsafety@columbia.edu or give us a call

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