

Focus on: Conditional Exclusions for Solvent-Contaminated Wipes



More information

Contact a dangerous waste specialist at one of our regional offices:

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Southwest Regional Office
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Central Regional Office
509-575-2490

ADA Accessibility

To request an ADA accommodation, contact Ecology by phone at 360-407-6700 or email at hwtrpubs@ecy.wa.gov, or visit ecology.wa.gov/accessibility. For Relay Service or TTY call 711 or 877-833-6341.



Example of reusable wipes

Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) adopted new rules for solvent-contaminated wipes as part of the Dangerous Waste Regulations. The new rules apply only to wipes contaminated with solvents that designate as dangerous waste.

Washington's final rules, effective on April 28, 2019 replaces the *Focus on Used Shop Towels Policy* (Ecology publication F-SHW-92-116), which exempted all laundered dangerous waste wipes when following best management practices.

What does this mean for you?

- If you follow the conditions in the rules, your solvent-contaminated wipes are conditionally excluded from the requirements of the dangerous waste regulations. This means the wipes wouldn't count towards your generator status and you wouldn't report them on your dangerous waste annual report.
- Wipes sent for laundering (reusable wipes)¹ are excluded from the definition of solid waste.
- Wipes sent for disposal² are still considered solid waste, but many are excluded from the definition of dangerous waste.
- If your business generates a rag or wipe that designates as dangerous waste for reasons other than the solvent's properties or listing, these rags and wipes are no longer exempt.

¹ Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-303-071(3)(rr) – Reusable

² Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 173-303-071(3)(ss) – Disposable

What counts as a solvent-contaminated wipe?

Common examples of wipes³ include paper towels, cloth rags, cotton swabs, and shop towels. Wipes may become contaminated with flammable or toxic solvents when used to clean up a spill or clean machinery, equipment, or parts.

Contaminated wipes that qualify for the exclusions must:

- Contain one or more of the **F001 through F005 solvents** listed in WAC 173-303-082 or the corresponding P- or U- listed solvents. These include:
 - Acetone
 - Benzene
 - n-Butanol
 - Chlorobenzene
 - Creosols
 - Cyclohexanone
 - Tetrachloroethylene
 - 1,2-Dichlorobenzene
 - Methyl isobutyl ketone
 - Ethyl acetate
 - 1,1,2- Trichloroethane
 - Ethyl benzene
 - 2-Ethoxyethanol
 - Isobutyl alcohol
 - Methanol
 - Methyl ethyl ketone
 - Toluene
 - Methylene chloride
 - Xylenes
 - Trichloroethylene*

**Only for wipes that are laundered and reused. Wipes contaminated with trichloroethylene are not eligible for the disposal option.*

- Exhibit a dangerous waste characteristic of **ignitability** or **toxicity** found in WAC 173-303-090 resulting from a solvent listed in WAC 173-303-080.
- Exhibit the characteristic of **ignitability** (D001) due to non-listed solvent(s).
- Designate only for dangerous waste criteria of state-only **toxicity and persistence**.

Contaminated wipes that don't qualify under the exclusions include those which:

- Contain listed dangerous waste other than solvents.
- Exhibit the federal characteristic of toxicity, corrosivity, or reactivity due to non-listed solvents or contaminants other than solvents (such as rags contaminated with TCLP metals).
- Solvent-contaminated wipes that are dangerous waste due to the presence of trichloroethylene (TCE) are not eligible for the disposal exclusion.



Clean reusable solvent wipe and disposable cotton swabs with product acetone.

³ **Wipe** means a woven or nonwoven shop towel, rag, pad, or swab made of wood pulp, fabric, cotton, polyester blends, or other material.

Management standards

If your wipes meet the conditions on the previous page, you must follow the management standards below to properly manage them under the exclusions.

Table 1: Management standards for solvent-contaminated wipes.

Management	Instructions
Storage	Accumulate, store, and transport wipes in non-leaking, closed containers that will contain free liquids should they occur.
Labeling	Label containers “Excluded Solvent-Contaminated Wipes.”
Accumulation Time Limits	Accumulate wipes up to 180 days from the start date of accumulation prior to being sent for cleaning or disposal.
Condition of Wipes Prior to Laundering or Disposal	<p>Wipes must contain no free liquids prior to laundering or disposal. Containers holding the wipes must also contain no free liquids before you transport off site.</p> <p>“No free liquids” is defined in WAC 173-303-040 and is based on the EPA Methods Test 9095B (Paint Filter Liquids Test), which is incorporated by reference.</p>
Free Liquids	Free liquids removed from the wipes or from the wipes container must be managed according to applicable regulations of Chapter 173-303 WAC.

You must send your wipes to an eligible handling facility

Reusable wipes must go to a laundry or dry cleaner whose discharge, if any, is regulated by sections 301 and 402, or section 307 of the Clean Water Act. It is your responsibility to ensure the destination facility meets this criteria. Disposal of wastewater resulting from laundering solvent-contaminated wipes must never be discharged to an on-site septic system.

Disposable wipes must be sent to a dangerous waste combustor, boiler, or industrial furnace regulated under 40 C.F.R. Parts 264, 265, or 266 Subpart H. You also have the option to send solvent-contaminated wipes to a permitted dangerous waste or hazardous waste landfill.

Generator recordkeeping

You must maintain documentation that includes:

- Name and address of the laundry facility, dry cleaner, dangerous waste landfill, or dangerous waste combustor.
- Documentation that the 180-day accumulation time limit is being met.
- Description of the process the generator is using to meet the “no free liquids” condition.

How do Washington's wipes exclusions differ from EPA?

1. Ecology doesn't allow disposal of solvent-contaminated wipes managed under this exclusion at a municipal landfill or non-dangerous waste incinerator.
2. Wipes that designate only for state criteria may be managed under these exclusions.

Oily rags

You may manage rags or wipes contaminated with free flowing used oil under the used oil rules if the used oil has not been removed or separated from the rag.

If you have drained, squeezed, centrifuged, etc. your wipes to remove free flowing used oil, they are considered solid waste and must be designated.

Paint and stain-contaminated rags

Wipes contaminated with paints and stains that include a solvent chemical as an ingredient typically do not meet the listing description under WAC 173-303-082 for F001-F005 listed waste.

However, wipes used with solvents (such as mineral spirits and paint thinners) to clean painted or stained surfaces may qualify if they:

- Aren't contaminated with a listed dangerous waste (other than solvents).
- Don't designate as a federal toxic waste from non-solvent contaminants (like TCLP metals).

Paint and stain-contaminated rags may also be eligible for the wipes exclusions if they designate only for state-criteria found in WAC 173-303-100 (such as WT02 for toxicity).

Still unsure?

If you're not sure if your wipes qualify under the "solvent-contaminated wipes" definition, contact a dangerous waste specialist at one of our regional offices.