

Focus on: Unknown Wastes

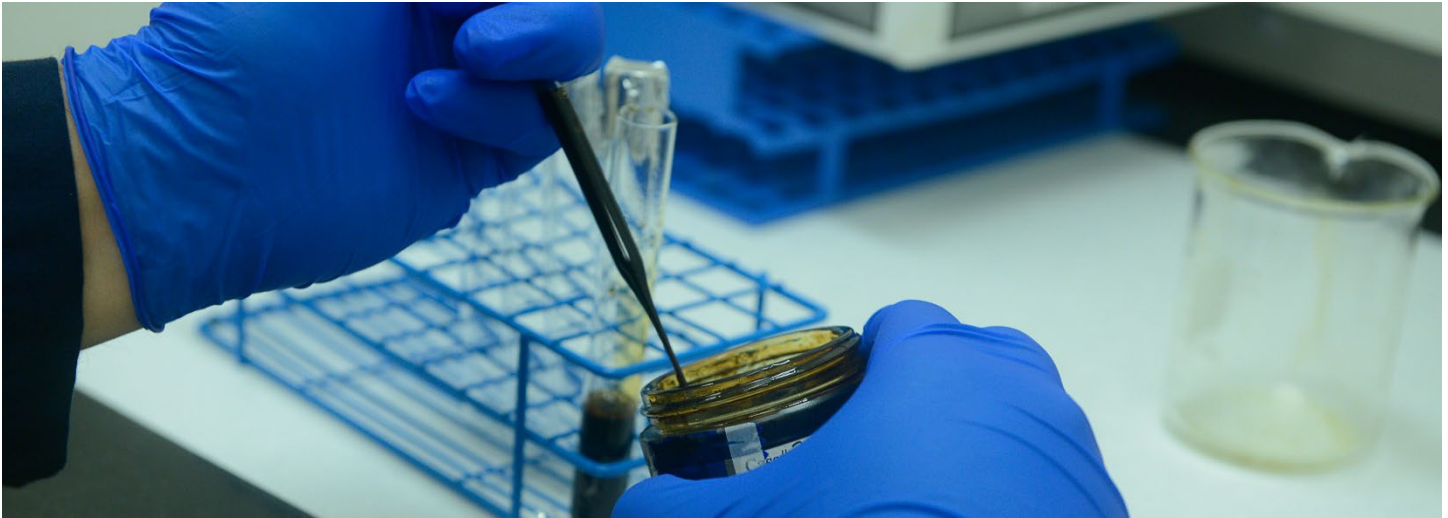


Figure 1: You may need to send some wastes to a lab for analysis before they can be properly designated.

More information

Contact a hazardous waste specialist at one of Ecology's regional offices:

Central Regional Office
509-575-2490

Eastern Regional Office
509-329-3400

Northwest Regional Office
206-594-0000

Southwest Regional Office
360-407-6300

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.

To protect human health and the environment, anyone who generates or discovers solid waste on their site must designate and manage it safely. Some solid wastes can only be designated through sampling and laboratory analysis because you don't have details about the process or materials used to generate the waste. This is **unknown waste**. Unknown waste awaiting designation is also called **dangerous waste pending analysis**.

This focus sheet explains how to manage dangerous waste pending analysis. Following this guidance will help you meet the conditions for exemption (based on [generator category](#)¹).

If you don't have enough information about the constituents, characteristics, and criteria of the waste, manage it according to this focus sheet's requirements while waiting for sampling results.

Designating your waste

Designation is the process of characterizing solid waste to determine if it is dangerous waste, what the hazards are, and how to properly manage it. You must follow specific [designation procedures](#)² to make an accurate determination.

¹ <https://ecology.wa.gov/GeneratorCategory>

² <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-303-070>

Use knowledge of the waste, based on products used and the processes generating the waste, to determine if it is:

- Listed³
- [Characteristic](#)⁴
- State-only dangerous waste due to [criteria](#)⁵

If a knowledge-based determination can't be made, you must test waste samples to evaluate for characteristics and criteria.

Sampling and testing procedures

When analytical testing is the only option, sample the waste promptly upon generation or discovery of the waste and have it tested to determine if it's dangerous waste. Once you send the samples off site for analysis, work with the lab to receive results in a timely manner.

When lab analysis is the only way to designate a solid waste, the accumulation time begins the day the waste is first generated or discovered on site.

If you are a large quantity generator with delayed laboratory analyses, this may impact your 90-day accumulation time limit. In these cases, you can request an extension of up to 30-days.⁶

Accumulation time limit

When managing a designated or "known" dangerous waste, the accumulation time limit begins when one or more of the following occurs:

- The waste is first generated, discovered on site, or first becomes subject to the Dangerous Waste Regulations.
- Small quantity generators first exceed their accumulation volume limits.
- Medium or large quantity generators exceed their satellite accumulation volume limits.⁷

Management requirements

The following ensures compliance with container and tank standards while awaiting analytical test results.

Container and tank storage

- Store unknown waste in a central accumulation area (CAA) and segregated from other waste.
- **Don't** store unknown waste in satellite accumulation areas. This is not allowed.
- Keep containers in good condition and closed at all times.
- Follow all other applicable CAA rules.⁸



Figure 2: These unmarked drums containing unknown contents may be managed under this guidance.

³ WAC 173-303-080 through 173-303-083

⁴ <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-303-090>

⁵ <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=173-303-100>

⁶ See the extension provisions in WAC 173-303-200(2)(a).

⁷ Satellite accumulation volume limits are prescribed in WAC 173-303-174(1).

⁸ See WAC 173-303-172 for MQGs and WAC 173-303-200 through -201 for LQGs.

Container and tank labeling

- Label each stored container and tank with the date of generation or discovery.
- Label containers and tanks with the words “dangerous waste pending analysis” or “hazardous waste pending analysis” and potential hazards associated with the contents (e.g., ignitable, toxic, reactive, corrosive).

Recordkeeping

- Maintain a log on site with the following information:
 - The date you generated or discovered the waste on site.
 - The date you shipped samples to a testing facility.
 - The testing facility information—name, address, and phone number.
- Follow all other waste designation recordkeeping⁹ requirements.

What to do if your unknown waste is dangerous waste

If the lab results indicate the unknown waste is a dangerous waste:

- The date you generated or discovered the waste on site is the start date for the accumulation time limit. This is because the waste was dangerous waste upon generation or discovery on site.
- You must remove any “pending analysis” labels and apply a dangerous (hazardous) waste label.
- You must verify all applicable hazard labels accurately identify the hazards associated with the contents of the containers or tanks.

For more information on container labeling and legibility requirements, review our [Focus on: Labeling Dangerous Waste](#)¹⁰ publication.

What to do if your unknown waste is non-dangerous waste

If the lab results indicate the unknown waste is non-dangerous, remove the “dangerous waste pending analysis” label and potential hazard label(s). The waste is not subject to the Dangerous Waste Regulations. Contact your local public health department for solid waste management requirements.

Note: This focus sheet replaces the Ecology publication, Effective Date of the 90-Day Storage (Accumulation) Requirement (Publication number 82-5).

⁹ WAC 173-303-210(3)

¹⁰ <https://apps.ecology.wa.gov/publications/SummaryPages/1904023>