

Guidelines for Contaminated Wipes

Please note that the following guidance is based on the [new rule](#) published in the [Federal Register by the Environmental Protection Agency on July 31, 2013](#). As of January 31, 2014, all facilities must comply with the new requirements for solvent-contaminated wipes.

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) modified the hazardous waste management regulations under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) to conditionally exclude solvent-contaminated wipes from hazardous waste regulations provided that businesses clean or dispose of them properly. The rule is based on EPA's final risk analysis, which concluded that wipes contaminated with certain hazardous solvents do not pose significant risk to human health and the environment when managed properly.

Wipes are used in conjunction with solvents for cleaning and other purposes by tens of thousands of facilities in numerous industrial sectors, such as printers, automobile repair shops and manufacturers of automobiles, electronics, furniture and chemicals. A solvent-contaminated wipe is a wipe (i.e. a shop towel, rag, pad, or swab made of wood pulp, fabric, cotton, polyester blends, or other material) that after use or after cleaning up a spill, contains a solvent that would be considered hazardous waste either because it is listed in the hazardous waste regulations, or because it exhibits the characteristic of ignitability. Solvent-contaminated wipes do not include wipes contaminated with hazardous waste other than solvents, or that exhibit the characteristics of toxicity, corrosivity, or reactivity due to contaminants other than solvents.

The [rule excludes wipes](#) that are contaminated with solvents listed as hazardous wastes under RCRA that are cleaned or disposed of properly. To be excluded, solvent-contaminated wipes must be managed in closed, labeled containers and cannot contain free liquids when sent for cleaning or disposal. Additionally, facilities that generate solvent-contaminated wipes must comply with certain recordkeeping requirements and may not accumulate wipes for longer than 180 days.

Reusable and Disposal Wipes

Specifically, the rule modifies regulations under RCRA for two types of solvent-contaminated wipes:

- (1) [Reusable wipes](#) that are cleaned and reused at industrial laundries or dry cleaners whose discharge, if any, is regulated under sections 301 and 402 or section 307 of the Clean Water Act [as noted in 40 CFR 261.4(a)(26)]; and
- (2) [Disposable wipes](#) sent for disposal to a municipal solid waste landfill or a solid waste combustor [as noted in 40 CFR 261.4(b)(18)].
 - a. [Municipal solid waste landfills](#) regulated under 40 CFR part 258 (including § 258.40) or to a hazardous waste landfill regulated under 40 CFR 264 or 265; or
 - b. [Combustors](#) that are regulated under section 129 of the Clean Air Act, or to a hazardous waste combustor, boiler, or industrial furnace under 40 CFR parts 264, 265, or 266 subpart H.

However, disposable wipes that are considered hazardous waste due to the presence of [trichloroethylene](#) are not eligible for the exclusion.

How to be excluded?

To be excluded, solvent-contaminated wipes must be:

- (1) Managed in non-leaking, [closed](#) containers
 - i. [During accumulation](#): complete contact between the fitted lid and the rim, and

- ii. When container is full or being transported: container must be sealed, secure, and all openings tightly bound and closed.
- (2) In containers labeled "*Excluded Solvent-Contaminated Wipes*";
- (3) Accumulated for no longer than 180 days. The 180 day clock begins at the start date of accumulation for each container (i.e., the date the first solvent-contaminated wipe is placed in the container).
- (4) Sent for cleaning or disposal without free liquids.
 - i. Condition is defined in 40 CFR 260.10 and is based on the EPA Methods Test 9095B (Paint Filter Liquids Test) or other authorized state standard; and
 - ii. Free liquids removed from the wipes or from the container holding the wipes must be managed according to applicable hazardous waste regulations in 40 CFR parts 260 through 273;
- (5) In compliance with certain recordkeeping requirements
 - i. Name and address of laundry, dry cleaner, landfill, or combustor
 - ii. Documentation that the 180-day accumulation time limit is being met, and
 - iii. Description of the process the generator is using to meet the "no free liquids" condition.

EPA estimates that the [final rule](#) will result in a net savings of between \$21.7 million and \$27.8 million per year. This includes a net savings of \$18.0 million per year in avoided regulatory costs and between \$3.7 million and \$9.9 million per year in other expected benefits, including: (1) pollution prevention and waste minimization benefits, (2) fire safety benefits, and (3) potential benefits to industrial laundries and dry cleaners from removal of the "waste" label for solvent-contaminated reusable wipes.