Hazard Alert

Exposure to Hazardous Materials

Hazards in Regular Garbage

Over the past few months, EHRS has investigated several incidents involving hazardous residues or items incorrectly placed in regular garbage which are handled by janitorial staff. To ensure the safety of janitors and of lab and building occupants, hazards must be neutralized or otherwise controlled before placing any material in the regular garbage.

Ensure no hazardous residues or objects are placed in regular garbage

Things to consider

Janitors combine the garbage from several labs into one bin. Even minor hazardous residues can potentially cause a reaction if they come in contact with incompatibles. Check the following before disposing in regular garbage:

Is it contaminated? Check if hazardous residues on gloves, paper towels, disposable tools, centrifuge tubes, vials, etc. can be neutralized or otherwise removed (e.g., by rinsing or evaporation). If not, segregate by compatibility and collect as hazardous waste.

Is it a puncture hazard? If yes, dispose in an approved sharps container.

Is it a cut hazard? Glass items must be minimum triple rinsed (use an appropriate solvent for the material first, followed by additional rinses with water; collect rinsates as hazardous) and disposed in the glass waste box.

For sharp non-glass items, such as knives or metal cans used to ship chemicals, sharp edges must be made safe (e.g., fold the sharp edge into the can) before placing items in the regular garbage.