

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SAFETY

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS MANAGEMENT

EMPTY CONTAINERS



Safe Disposal of Chemical Containers

For more information, visit:

<https://purdue.edu/ehps/rem/environmental-programs/waste/empty.html>

Improper disposal of chemical containers can pose serious safety risks to anyone working around or handling trash receptacles. Even small amounts of residual chemicals can create hazards if containers are not properly cleaned and prepared before disposal.

Why this matters

- Residual chemicals can release harmful vapors or odors.
- Some chemicals that are non-hazardous on their own may react when mixed with other substances in the trash.
- Chemical reactions inside trash receptacles can cause fires or release dangerous vapors.
- Glass containers may break, increasing the risk of cuts or puncture injuries for those handling waste.
- Sealed or pressurized containers can explode during compaction, potentially spraying chemicals or producing sharp fragments.



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Administrative Operations

Proper cleaning and disposal steps

Before disposing of empty chemical containers:

- Triple-rinse the container using a solvent capable of removing the original contents.
- Depending on the chemical or solvent used, collect the rinsate for disposal by Environmental Health and Safety (EHS).
- Submit a pickup request for rinsate through established EHS hazardous waste handling and disposal procedures.
- Label cleaned containers with a "Safe for Disposal" sticker.
- Remove all caps or lids before disposal.
- Follow Building Services procedures for trash disposal based on the container type.

If you are unable to fully remove residual hazardous materials, do not place the container in the trash. Instead, submit the container for pickup through the EHSA online portal.

Taking these steps helps protect custodial staff, waste handlers and the campus community while supporting safe and compliant laboratory operations.