

## Universal Waste

Universal wastes are wastes that meet hazardous waste criteria but, because they pose a relatively low-risk compared to other hazardous wastes and are generated by a wide variety and large number of businesses, are exempt from regulation as hazardous waste.

Although universal wastes are exempt from the hazardous waste regulations of Subchapters 1 through 7 of the Vermont Hazardous Waste Management Regulations (VHWMR), they still must be managed according to the Subchapter 9 Universal Waste Management Standards. Wastes that can be managed as universal waste in Vermont include: **batteries, certain pesticides, mercury thermostats, PCB-containing fluorescent light ballasts, lamps** (e.g., fluorescent bulbs), **mercury-containing devices** (e.g., mercury switches), and **cathode ray tubes** (e.g., color computer monitors and TV screens).

In general, the Universal Waste Management Standards include requirements that apply to small and large quantity “handlers” of universal waste (including specific management standards for each category of universal waste), “universal waste transporters,” and “destination facilities.” However, since the vast majority of the Vermont businesses that manage universal waste fall into the “small quantity handler” category, this fact sheet focuses primarily on those requirements.

### What is a Small Quantity Handler?

A “**universal waste handler**” is defined as:

- 1) *A generator of universal waste; or*
- 2) *The owner or operator of a facility, including all contiguous property, that receives universal waste from other universal waste handlers, accumulates universal waste, and sends universal waste to another universal waste handler, to a destination facility, or to a foreign destination.*

A “**small quantity handler**” is defined as:

*A universal waste handler who does not accumulate 5,000 kilograms (11,000 pounds) or more total of universal waste other than CRTs (batteries, pesticides, thermostats, ballasts, lamps, or mercury-containing devices, calculated collectively), and who does not accumulate 36,288 kilograms (40 tons) or more of CRTs, at any time.*

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### What does a Small Quantity Handler need to comply with?

Although **each category of universal waste has unique waste management requirements** (individual fact sheets are available for lamps, mercury-containing devices and CRTs), small quantity handlers must manage all universal wastes according to the following general requirements:

- Manage universal wastes in a way that prevents breakage and releases to the environment.
- Keep containers of universal waste closed.
- Immediately contain and transfer any universal wastes that show evidence of leakage or damage to an appropriate container.
- Meet waste-specific container or packaging requirements.
- Label or mark the universal waste (or container holding the universal waste) to indicate that it is a waste or universal waste. For example, universal waste lamps should be marked as “Universal Waste Lamps,” “Waste Lamps,” or “Used Lamps.”
- Accumulate universal waste for no longer than one year (a handler must be able to demonstrate the length of time that a universal waste has been accumulated from the date it became a waste or is received).
- Ensure that employees handling universal waste are familiar with proper handling and emergency procedures, relative to their responsibilities.
- In the event of a release of universal waste, comply with the emergency actions and reporting requirements of VHWMR Section 7-105(a), and determine if any material resulting from the release is hazardous waste.

### Where can Small Quantity Handlers bring Universal Waste?

Small quantity handlers can bring their universal wastes to another universal waste handler or a destination facility (which, in general, is defined as *a facility that treats, disposes of, or recycles a particular category of universal waste*). Small quantity handlers may also send universal waste to a foreign destination provided the specific export requirements of VHWMR Section 7-912(k) are met.

### Who can Transport Universal Waste?

Small quantity handlers can either self-transport their own universal waste or hire a commercial transporter. Anyone that transports universal waste must comply with applicable Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements and, if using a vehicle with a gross vehicle weight greater than one ton, with the solid waste permit requirements of 10 V.S.A. § 6607a. No hazardous waste manifest shipping document is required for the transport of universal waste.

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#### **For more information contact:**

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