



Colorado Department  
of Environmental  
and Natural Resources

## *Compliance Bulletin* *Hazardous Waste*

# Management of Mercury-containing Devices

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### **Why regulate mercury-containing devices?**

Waste mercury-containing devices are commonly generated by a wide variety of generator types including households, medical clinics, hospitals, the electronics industry, dairies, small businesses, pipeline monitoring companies, and other industrial operations. Such devices include mercury thermostats, thermometers, manometers, barometers, blood pressure cuffs, electrical switches and relays, gauges and flow regulators, py-

ment standards of the universal waste rule are that the waste does not count toward the monthly total of hazardous waste in determining generator category; the waste can be shipped without a hazardous waste manifest; the waste can be shipped by common carrier instead of a hazardous waste transporter; there are reduced notification and record-keeping requirements, and the storage time limits are less restrictive. Because universal waste does not require a hazardous waste manifest for shipment in Colorado, it is not considered hazardous waste under US Department of Transportation regulations, though other regulations may apply. State requirements for universal waste transporters are included in 6 CCR 1007-3 Part 273 Subpart D.

### **What are the requirements for universal waste management?**

#### Categories of Universal Waste Handlers

Under the Universal Waste Rule, persons who generate or accumulate waste mercury-containing devices are considered “handlers” of universal waste. [6 CCR 1007-3 Section 273.9] [Note: this definition is different from that of a **generator** of hazardous waste].

There are two categories of handlers, Small Quantity Handlers of Universal Waste and Large Quantity Handlers of Universal Waste. A small quantity handler of universal waste is one who does not accumulate more than 5,000 kilograms of universal at any one time. A large quantity handler of universal waste is a handler of universal waste who accumulates 5,000 kilograms or more of universal waste. [6 CCR 1007-3 Section 273.9]

**In the case of open-ended universal waste mercury-containing devices, a handler in either category cannot accumulate more than 35 kilograms (about 77 pounds) of elemental mercury at one time.**

The designation of small quantity or large quantity handler of universal waste has no relationship to a facility’s hazardous waste **generator** status. Thus a small quantity generator of hazardous waste may be a large quantity handler of universal waste, and a facility that is a large quantity generator of hazardous waste may be a small quantity handler of universal waste.

If, at any time during a calendar year, a facility exceeds the quantities for a small quantity handler of universal waste, they would be considered a large quantity handler until the next calendar year when they can reevaluate their status. [6 CCR 1007-3 Section 273.9]

#### Labeling

When universal waste mercury-containing devices are generated, they must be labeled as “Waste \_\_\_,” “Used \_\_\_” or “Universal Waste Mercury-containing Devices.” If the waste is placed into an accumulation container, only the container needs to be labeled, not the individual items in it. If a device is not in good condition and is leaking or shows sign that it could leak, it must be individually over-packed in a closed container that is properly labeled and capable of preventing a release of hazardous constituents to the environment under reasonably foreseeable conditions. [6 CCR 1007-3 Sections 273.13, 273.33]

#### Accumulation of Waste

Universal waste handlers are required to manage their waste in a manner that prevents releases of the waste or waste constituents. [6



A handler of universal waste mercury-containing devices must ensure that workers are thoroughly familiar with the procedures to safely drain mercury from open-ended devices and the precautions needed for worker safety. They must be familiar with the type of equipment to be used and how to operate and maintain it.

Handlers of universal wastes must ensure that the elemental mercury is removed from the devices in a manner that is designed to prevent the release of any universal waste or component of universal waste to the environment. Elemental mercury may be removed from a device only if these activities are done over or in a containment device (e.g., a tray or pan) sufficient to collect and contain any mercury released in case of breakage or spillage. All mercury removed from open-ended devices or spilled during the removal activities must be immediately transferred to a closed, non-leaking container that meets the requirements of Section 262.34 of the Colorado Hazardous Waste Regulations. immimm