Waste Identification

The first step in the management of hazardous waste is to determine whether a material is a waste. A waste is generally defined as a material, which is discarded, including materials that are either spent or intended to be thrown away. Materials that are being used for their intended purpose or are otherwise still reusable are not considered waste. A waste can be a solid, liquid, semisolid or contained gaseous material.

Apart from the above definition, below are a few general steps to identify if a chemical/substance is waste:

- Spent material.
- Unusable because it does not meet its required specifications.
- Past its expiration date.
- Unlabeled, and has been unlabeled for more than 30 days.
- Abandoned.
- A container that once held chemicals.
- Unwanted and intended to be discarded or recycled.

A regulated chemical waste is defined as a waste which, due to its quantity, concentration, or physical and chemical characteristics may

- Cause, or significantly contribute to, an increase in mortality or an increase in serious or incapacitating illness; or
- Pose a substantial present or potential threat to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of, or otherwise managed.

The disposal of regulated waste and other unwanted chemicals has become increasingly complicated. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulate the treatment and disposal of chemical wastes in Texas. The purpose of this section is to help you better understand exactly what is and is not a regulated chemical waste. In doing so, we hope that you may be able to design experiments with waste minimization in mind, and dispose of chemical waste generated in your laboratory in a manner consistent with legal requirements.

After a material is identified as waste, the person responsible for generating the waste must determine if the waste is a hazardous waste. If assistance is needed to determine the hazardous nature of a waste, contact the Environmental Health, Safety & Risk Management Department at 468-6034/468-4532.

A hazardous waste is a waste:

- Which exhibits any of four hazardous waste characteristics and/or
- Falls into any of the four specific listing descriptions