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EPA Finalizes Rule to Help Academic Laboratories Safely Manage Their Hazardous Waste

EPA is finalizing the Academic Laboratory Rule to help improve the environmental performance of teaching and research laboratories at eligible academic entities. This rule provides these laboratories with increased regulatory flexibility, while helping them safely manage their hazardous waste.

Action

EPA is adding a new subpart -- Subpart K -- to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) hazardous waste generator regulatory requirements. This alternative set of regulations allows eligible academic entities the flexibility to make hazardous waste determinations in the laboratory; at an on-site central accumulation area; or at an on-site treatment, storage, or disposal facility (TSDF). Also, this rule provides incentives for eligible academic entities to clean-out old and expired chemicals that may pose unnecessary risk. Further, this rule requires the development of a Laboratory Management Plan (LMP) which is expected to result in safer laboratory practices and increased awareness of hazardous waste management. Eligible academic entities may also choose to remain subject to the pre-existing hazardous waste generator requirements. Eligible academic entities are colleges and universities, and teaching hospitals and nonprofit research institutes that are either owned by or formally affiliated with a college or university.

EPA is finalizing this alternative because the Agency believes laboratories at eligible academic entities have different hazardous waste generation patterns than typical industries. Industrial waste generators typically produce large volumes of a few waste streams. Eligible academic entities' laboratories, on the other hand, produce a relatively small volume of many different types of waste. As such, academic laboratories find it challenging to manage these wastes under the existing regulations. The Academic Laboratory Rule gives eligible academic entities more flexibility, while helping them safely manage their hazardous waste.

For More Information

More information is available about the Standards Applicable to Generators of Hazardous Waste; Subpart K; Standards Applicable to Academic Laboratories Final Rule at: <http://www.epa.gov/epawaste/hazard/generation/labwaste/index.htm>. To find more detailed information or to ask a question, please go to www.epa.gov/wastes, and click on Find an Answer or Ask a Question.