Some dental office wastes can be harmful to human health and the environment. Therefore, very specific requirements often apply to waste storage, labeling, and disposal.

Generators of hazardous and medical wastes must file an application with the SF Department of Public Health. Call (415) 252-3900 for further guidance. In addition, all dental offices must obtain a wastewater permit or an exemption from the SF Public Utilities Commission. Call (415) 695-7310 for more information.

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<th><strong>DENTAL OFFICE WASTE CHEAT SHEET</strong></th>
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**Amalgam**

*Includes “scrap” amalgam; amalgam capsules (empty, leaking or unusable); contact amalgam (extracted teeth with silver fillings); amalgam pieces captured by vacuum pump filters and screens; sludge from separators; and, chair-side traps, vacuum pump filters, and screens.*

**Why Hazardous:** Contains mercury.

**Disposal:** Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler OR the city’s VSQG* Program. Recycling is the preferred method of disposal.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Mix only the amount of amalgam you will need for a restoration. Stop or cut back on installing amalgam restorations.

**X-Ray Developer**

**Why Hazardous:** May contain hydroquinone.

**Disposal:** When developer is used the hydroquinone is depleted. Completely used developer can be poured down the drain. All other developer must be placed in a properly labeled container and disposed of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler OR the city’s VSQG* Program.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to a digital x-ray.

**X-Ray Cleaner**

**Why Hazardous:** May contain chromium compounds. Check package label or Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for any form of chromium, such as sodium dichromate.

**Disposal:** If cleaner is hazardous, place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler OR the city’s VSQG* Program.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to digital x-ray. Choose a non-chromium cleaner or employ mechanical cleaning methods.

**X-Ray Film**

**Why Hazardous:** Contains silver.

**Disposal:** There are many companies that can reclaim silver from the film and the plastic for other products. Recycling is the preferred method of disposal.

Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler OR the city’s VSQG* Program.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to a digital x-ray.

**X-Ray Fixer**

**Why Hazardous:** Contains silver.

**Disposal:** Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler OR the city’s VSQG* Program. Recycling is the preferred method of disposal.

Using a silver recovery unit, up to ten gallons of fixer can be treated on site per month. Recovered silver can be sold to a metal reclaimer. Treated fixer must be non-hazardous and in compliance with local discharge limits before it can be poured down the drain. Contact SFPUC at (415) 695-7310 for more information.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to a digital x-ray.

**Lead Foils, Bite Wings, and Lead Aprons**

**Why Hazardous:** Contains lead.

**Disposal:** Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler OR the city’s VSQG* Program. Recycling is the preferred method of disposal.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to a digital x-ray.
**Chemical Sterilant**

Also known as “chemiclave solutions.”

**Why Hazardous:** Often hazardous, but depends on the concentrations and ingredients. Check with vendor or Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

**Disposal:** Medical facilities are allowed to neutralize sterilants with glutaraldehyde or ortho-phthalaldehyde (OPA) onsite by adding glycine. Completely neutralized sterilant can be disposed of down the drain. Contact SFPUC at (415) 695-7310 for further guidance.

If not neutralized, place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler OR the city’s VSQG* Program.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Switch to a steam autoclave or dry heat oven. (Do not use ethylene-oxide gas.) Use the minimum amount of sterilant necessary. Neutralize sterilant, if appropriate, with glycine. Use a sterilant containing less-hazardous active ingredients not subject to treatment regulations, such as quaternary ammonium compounds.

**Cleaning Solvents and Disinfectants**

**Why Hazardous:** Contain a variety of hazardous substances. Check with vendor or Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS).

**Disposal:** Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler OR the city’s VSQG* Program.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Use all of a cleaning product in a container, removing the need to dispose of it as hazardous waste.

Never use bleach to clean vacuum lines. Bleach encourages the release of harmful mercury from amalgam. Instead, clean vacuum lines with non-bleach cleaner. Examples include: All-In-One, E-Vac, Evacuation Cleaner, EZ-Zyme, Gobble Plus, Green and Clean, MAXI-EVAC, ProE-Vac, Purevac, Sani-Treet Plus, Stay-Clean, Super-Dent, Turbo Vac Line Flush, VacuCleanse, or VAC-U-EZ.

**Medical Wastes**

Includes biohazardous waste (e.g. blood-soaked waste and human surgery specimens), sharps (e.g. needles and broken glass items), and pharmaceutical waste.

**Why Hazardous:** May be infectious or cause bodily harm. Unused pharmaceuticals are presumed hazardous, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

**Disposal:** Disposal requirements vary with type and quantity of medical waste. In general, all medical waste must be disposed of through a certified medical waste hauler.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Use all of a pharmaceutical, when feasible, removing the need to dispose of it as hazardous waste.

* VSQG = Very Small Quantity Generator. See Option 2 in the box to the right for more information.

**Universal Wastes**

Includes mercury thermometers, fluorescent lamps, batteries, blood pressure gauges, etc.

**Why Hazardous:** Contain a variety of hazardous substances, often mercury.

**Disposal:** Place in a properly labeled container and dispose of through a licensed hazardous waste hauler/recycler OR the city’s VSQG* Program. Recycling is the preferred method of disposal.

**Less Toxic Tips:** Reduce the use of products that qualify as universal wastes and use alternative products, when available (e.g., digital thermometers and rechargeable batteries).

**Options for Hazardous Waste Disposal**

**Option 1:** Have a licensed recycling contractor, mail-in service, or hazardous waste hauler remove hazardous wastes. Recycling is always preferred, if it is possible. There are many waste haulers—both local and national—that accept hazardous wastes.

AERC Recycling Solutions  
(510) 290-1462 • www.aercrecycling.com  
AW, EM, MSK - Pick-up and Mail-in

Ecosolutions/ Stericycle  
(888) 278-7269 • www.stericycle.com  
AW, PW, SW, S, MW, PhW, MSK - Pick-up only

Integrated Waste Control  
(800) 246-9278  
AW, EM, PW, SW, S, MW, PhW, MSK - Pick-up only

Photowaste Recycling  
(415) 459-8807  
AW, EM, PW, SW, S, PhW, MSK - Pick-up and Mail-in

Safety Kleen  
(707) 584-0415 • www.safety-kleen.com  
AW, EM, PW, SW, S, PhW, MSK - Pick-up only (no sharps)

**Option 2:** Use San Francisco’s Very Small Quantity Generator (VSQG) Program. Most dental offices in San Francisco qualify for this program, allowing them to schedule convenient pick-ups and drop-offs of hazardous wastes. Disposal fees are generally less because they are subsidized by garbage bills.

VSQG Program  
Pick-up: (415) 355-3777, Drop-off: (415) 330-1425  
www.sfenvironment.com  
AW, EM, PW, SW - Pick-up and Drop-off

**KEY**

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Note: The companies listed above are for your convenience. Inclusion does not imply an endorsement from the City and County of San Francisco. For a more extensive list of waste haulers, both local and nation-wide, call (415) 355-3700.