

Guidance for Empty Containers

University of Tennessee Knoxville

Definition of an Empty Container:

Under the E.P.A., hazardous waste regulations, a hazardous product container is generally considered empty if its contents have been removed by commonly employed practices such as pouring, pumping, or aspirating, and no more than one inch or one percent of residue remains on the bottom of the container (whichever is the lesser amount). If the container is greater than or equal to 110 gallons, no more than 0.3 percent by weight of the total container capacity can remain.

Recycle:

Empty chemical containers make excellent hazardous waste containers and laboratory personnel should make efforts to recycle them whenever possible. If you do recycle them, it is important that you ensure that the chemicals or hazardous waste collected in them are compatible with the container or any residuals that may remain. If you do not have a use for them there may be another laboratory or department that needs empty containers. Environmental Health and Safety (974-5084) may know of a laboratory that needs empty bottles.

Containers Containing Acutely Hazardous Chemicals:

Containers that held acutely hazardous chemicals must be triple rinsed to be considered empty. Containers that are triple rinsed must have the rinse material collected and disposed of as hazardous waste. Please consult the University of Tennessee's Hazardous Waste Management Policy on the EHS web-site for the proper procedures to dispose of hazardous waste. To determine whether waste is hazardous or acutely hazardous please check the EHS web-site for a list of acutely hazardous waste chemicals. If rinse material is anticipated to be excessive you may wish to consider disposing of the chemical container containing acutely hazardous chemical as a hazardous waste.

Compressed Gas Cylinders:

Containers which held compressed gas are empty when the pressure in the container reaches atmospheric pressure (i.e. the cylinder is completely depressurized). Although the cylinder is considered empty, the empty cylinder must be managed as hazardous waste. Please bring empty

cylinders (owned by UT and not rented by Airgas) to EHS, or contact EHS for guidance. Cylinders that are rented by Airgas or other companies should be sent back to the supplier.

Aerosol Cans:

Aerosol container must be completely empty of product and propellant to be considered completely empty. The spray mechanism or nozzles must be in place and functional. Aerosol cans formerly containing pesticides, flammable propellents or acutely hazardous chemicals, although considered empty, will need to be managed as a hazardous waste.

Defacing Labels:

Once the container has been emptied, before it can be put into the regular trash, the original label must be covered over or defaced. Covering or defacing labels will help other personnel know the container is empty and has been properly managed in your laboratory. If you deface a label, use a good marker and ensure all hazard warning information is not visible and "EMPTY" is clearly written on the container before discarding in the dumpster.



Questions:

If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Environmental Health and Safety at 974-5084.