

What you should know about hazardous waste

■ If your company routinely uses pesticides, you should be familiar with the amendments to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) that govern the handling, transportation and disposal of hazardous waste generated by Small Quantity Generators (SQGs).

Disobeying RCRA can result in penalties up to \$25,000 *per day* per violation.

Defining it—A waste is considered hazardous if it has one of the following characteristics: ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity or toxicity, or if it is listed in the Code of Federal Regulations.

The EPA says that pesticides include such specific wastes as:

- unusable or unidentifiable materials;
- rinse water used to clean pesticide application equipment;
- containers that hold (or held) pesticides, unless such vessels have been cleaned in accordance with regulations or label instructions; and/or
- soil or other material contaminated from pesticide spills.

Equipment which is being repaired or refurbished can also generate hazardous wastes, such as cleaning solvents, engine degreasers, carburetor cleaners, rust removers, used lead acid batteries, and paint thinners.

The EPA also says that the diluents used with pesticides give them hazardous waste characteristics.

You are one—You are a SQG, according to RCRA, if you generate between 220 and 2,200 lbs. of hazardous waste per month. Included are rinsate water, the weights of containers, and all solvents. Not included are empty containers, wastewater that has been legally discharged into a publicly-owned treatment facility, and lead acid batteries that are being recycled or reclaimed.

Those who generate *less* than 220



lbs. of hazardous waste a month must follow other provisions of RCRA:

- they must know exactly which of their wastes are hazardous;
- they must never accumulate more than 2,200 lbs. of such wastes on any one site at any one time; and
- they must dispose of all such waste in a manner which is approved by the state. (Check this carefully, because different states have enacted different rules.)

More yet—Other terms of the act specifically state that a hazardous waste generating company must:

- obtain an EPA Identification Number;
- identify which hazardous waste it generates; and
- never accumulate such waste on its site for more than 180 days (or 270 days if it must be transported more than 200 miles).

Wastes must be transported only by firms which have EPA Identification Numbers, comply with U.S. Department of

Transportation rules for shipping hazardous wastes and all rules relating to hazardous waste containers, labeling and safety.

Copies of all records must be retained for a minimum of three years.

The EPA also has the power—granted it through the Superfund law—to make waste generators pay part of the clean-up for environmental problems at hazardous waste disposal sites.

What to do—You can reduce risks and liabilities which can be incurred under RCRA and the Superfund law in five simple ways:

- 1) Estimate all job needs accurately so that you will not have chemical products left over after completing a specific assignment.
- 2) Never mix hazardous wastes, which can increase the total amount and make recycling difficult or impossible.
- 3) Recycle hazardous wastes whenever possible.
- 4) Document everything, and keep the records.
- 5) Watch that your disposal facility(ies) personnel follow all regulations.

—The author of this article, Bess Ritter May, is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia. She is a frequent contributor to LM.

More information

- Want more information concerning hazardous waste laws in the green industry?

Call the EPA for these free booklets: "Does Your Business Produce Hazardous Wastes?" and "Understanding the Small Quantity Generator Hazardous Waste Rules." You can also obtain a list of hazardous wastes through the EPA.

The EPA's phone number: (800) 424-9346.

—B.R.M.