Why You Should Care

Does this pipette go in the red container? The yellow container? Is it sharp or not? How do I get someone to take it away for me? What does the animal facility staff need to know? Because there are so many definitions and regulations around Regulated Medical Waste (R.M.W.), recombinant/synthetic nucleic acids (r/sNA), toxic chemicals, and other waste streams, identify your waste streams and type of contamination before beginning your research, and work closely with EHS to help you manage all your waste. Waste handling and disposal can be a confusing process, but there are lots of resources to help you and a few key rules.

Best Practices

• **Plan ahead** – Look at your supplies, equipment, and materials you plan to use on the next experiment. Are you working with r/sNA, biological toxins, human materials, needles, plasticware, disposable gloves, animal materials, cell media, chemotherapeutics, etc.? Each of these has very specific waste streams based on risk, regulations, and whether it can poke through a bag. Think about these items in advance of starting your research – it can save you time and cost in the long run.

• **Follow the guides** – The EHS website contains a [biological waste guide](https://www.ehs.cornell.edu/biological-waste-guide), a [hazardous waste manual](https://www.ehs.cornell.edu/hazardous-waste-manual), and a [radiation safety manual](https://www.ehs.cornell.edu/radiation-safety-manual) that will assist you with identifying and properly disposing of your waste streams. Use them. If you can’t identify your material using the guide, call EHS.

• **Request pickups in advance** – Go to the [EHS Waste Pickups](https://www.ehs.cornell.edu/waste-pickups) page to request your waste pickup.

• **Think about the next person** – You are not the last person to handle your waste. Custodial staff, EHS personnel, CVM Waste Facility personnel, and Ithaca waste collectors will all potentially come into contact with your solid waste. Facilities personnel performing plumbing services, EHS personnel wastewater treatment plant personnel, and the general public can potentially come into contact with liquid waste, depending on whether you pour it down the drain or collect it in a container. Keep this in mind when deciding what to do with your waste.

• **Label that bag** – People handling your waste downstream of your lab may have questions, so make sure every container or bag of waste leaving your lab is labeled with the name of the Principal Investigator, the Section and Lab information, and the phone number. Avery Labels are fine.

Things to Avoid

• **Do not guess** – if you don’t know whether your waste should be regulated medical waste, should be poured down the sink, is a chemotherapeutic, or counts as a sharp, don’t guess…ask EHS.

• **Do not mix** – Call EHS before mixing chemical, biological, and radiological waste in any combination – it is very difficult to dispose of and costs a lot of money.
Where to get training and more information

- View the EHS Visual Laboratory Waste Disposal Guide and related training
- View the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) Waste Disposal Website and Guide
- View the EHS Biosafety Manual
- View the EHS Hazardous Waste Manual
- View the EHS Radiation Safety Manual

**Visual Guide**

Always label your Regulated Medical Waste (R.M.W., "biowaste") with this information:

- Name
- Section/Lab
- Building
- Phone number

Never place R.M.W. into the regular trash; always make sure you are disposing of your waste streams in the appropriate manner.

This image demonstrates an inappropriate method to dispose of sharps; the bin is overflowing and the glass bottle is not an acceptable substitute for an R.M.W. bin.