

Environmental Programs

Special Waste Regulations

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Special Waste

Materials that have an inherent hazard, like oven cleaner and varsol, are called dangerous goods. Some unused dangerous goods must be returned to their manufacturer once they are no longer needed. Most leftover dangerous goods, however, are classified as special wastes when the time comes to dispose of them.

Special waste can affect human health and the environment if it is not handled and disposed of properly. Most of the Yukon's special waste is used motor oil. Other common special wastes include:

- used anti-freeze;
- dead batteries;
- leftover cleaners, solvents, paints, pesticides, industrial chemicals and petroleum products; and
- biomedical wastes.

How Much Do We Generate?

Exact figures for the generation of special waste in the Yukon are not available but the annual special waste collection program removes 25 tonnes alone. This does not include special wastes that are disposed of or returned to the manufacturer during the remainder of the year. If national estimates of special waste generated per capita are applied to the Yukon, we probably produce about 100 tonnes of special waste each year.

Our Legacy

Today we know that special wastes present a serious hazard to health, safety and the environment. In the past, however, many kinds of special waste were treated like regular garbage because of lack of money and a poor understanding of the consequences. In many areas this has caused:

- groundwater contamination by leachate (the liquid that seeps through the waste);
- surface water contamination through run-off and contact with contaminated groundwater;
- local air pollution through open burning and evaporation;
- soil contamination;
- direct poisoning and injury to people and wildlife;
- poisoning of the food chain; and
- fires and explosions.

In the past, waste oil was poured into the City of Whitehorse landfill where it continues to cause environmental problems today.

The Law

The Yukon government responded to community concerns by passing Special Waste Regulations under the Yukon *Environment Act* in 1995. These regulations prohibit the unauthorized release of special wastes into the environment and establish a tracking and reporting system to monitor special wastes.

Permits

Under the Special Waste Regulations, a special waste permit is required to generate, handle or dispose of special waste.

You will need a permit if you:

- mix or dilute special wastes;
- generate, store or handle special wastes;
- release or dispose special wastes (including burning and bioremediation), or
- handle special wastes generated by other persons or businesses.

Other Topics

Fact Sheets are also available on the following topics:

- Handling Guidelines for Solid Waste Facilities
- Disposal Options
- Storage Options
- Used Oil
- Used Batteries
- Used Antifreeze
- Used Solvents
- Used Oil from Piston Aircraft
- Dust Suppressants
- Photochemical Waste

For more information on the Special Waste Regulations, please contact:

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Copies of Yukon regulations may be viewed online at <http://environmentyukon.gov.yk.ca/monitoringenvironment/> under the "Standards & Approvals" section, or at any Yukon Public Library, territorial agent, territorial representative or regional services office. You may purchase copies at the Inquiry Centre, Yukon Government Administration Building, 2071-2nd Avenue in Whitehorse, or by mail from the Subscriptions Clerk, Yukon Government Queen's Printer, Box 2703, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 2C6 (phone (867) 667-5783 or toll free 1-800-661-0408 extension 5783).

