

Newsroom

 [Contact Us](#)

 You are here: [EPA Home](#) » [Newsroom](#) » [News Releases By Date](#) » Oregon State University Agrees to Safely Manage

News Releases By Date

Oregon State University Agrees to Safely Manage Hazardous Waste to Better Protect Students and Faculty

Release Date: 03/14/2016

Contact Information: Suzanne Skadowski, skadowski.suzanne@epa.gov, 206-553-2160

OSU will implement a comprehensive training program and pay \$275,000 in penalties for hazardous waste violations

(Seattle – March 14, 2016) Oregon State University has agreed to provide comprehensive training for its personnel to properly identify hazardous waste generated at its campus in Corvallis, Oregon. In the settlement announced today by the Environmental Protection Agency, the university will also pay \$275,000 in penalties for multiple violations of federal hazardous waste identification rules and agreed to comply with waste management requirements.

“Strict accountability for hazardous waste is vital to protecting people and the environment at every step of the way,” said Director Ed Kowalski of EPA’s Pacific Northwest Office of Compliance and Enforcement. “Without knowing what its hazardous wastes were from the very beginning, it was impossible for Oregon State University to ensure its chemicals were handled safely, which could have put students, faculty, and first responders at significant risk.”

In 2013, EPA inspectors found nearly 2000 containers of hazardous wastes, in at least six OSU campus laboratories and other buildings that were not properly identified, managed or safely stored, in violation of the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Multiple types of hazardous wastes were found, including solvents and other flammable liquids, acids and other caustic, toxic and reactive chemicals, and used oil. In addition, OSU did not have a RCRA permit to manage and store the hazardous wastes.

Failure to accurately identify hazardous wastes increases the likelihood that it will be improperly managed as non-hazardous waste, or that not all of the hazards will be identified before treatment or disposal. Considerable quantities of hazardous chemicals are found not just at large manufacturing facilities, but at a variety of facilities, where they pose the very same risks. OSU is a college campus with more than 25,000 students and 4,700 full time employees, and the potential for harm was substantial if a release, fire, or explosion had occurred near a classroom or other building where hazardous wastes were being generated. Several of the locations where mismanaged waste was accumulated were in close proximity to students and faculty.

OSU’s failure to identify all of the hazards associated with each waste also posed a safety threat to the facilities with which OSU contracts to transport, treat and dispose of the waste. If a spill occurred during transportation, the flammable, reactive or other hazards from the waste might not be known to the transporter or emergency responders, putting them at risk. If misidentified wastes were sent to a treatment and disposal facility then incineration, neutralization, and even mixing with water could have resulted in fires or explosions.

In addition, because OSU failed to properly identify its hazardous wastes, waste disposed of as non-hazardous may well have been hazardous, and therefore unsuitable for disposal in a non-hazardous solid waste landfill. Landfill workers who subsequently handled these materials were put at risk of harm in handling wastes that should have been identified as hazardous wastes.

If OSU had identified its hazardous wastes at the point of generation as required by RCRA, the wastes could have been safely managed and this potential for harm could have been significantly decreased.

 Search this collection of releases | or search all news releases

 Get news releases by email

 View selected historical press releases from 1970 to 1998 in the EPA History website.

Recent additions

- 04/22/2016 [NOTICE: Update Your EPA News RSS Feed](#)
- 04/22/2016 [NOTICE: Update Your EPA News RSS Feed](#)
- 04/22/2016 [NOTICE: Update Your EPA News RSS Feed](#)
- 04/22/2016 [NOTICE: Update Your EPA News RSS Feed](#)
- 04/22/2016 [NOTICE: Update Your EPA News RSS Feed](#)

Learn more about the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) at: <http://www.epa.gov/rcra>.

###

[Receive our News Releases Automatically by Email](#)

[EPA Home](#) | [Privacy and Security Notice](#) | [Contact Us](#)



News by E-mail



EPA Mobile



Widgets



News Feeds



Podcasts

