

Frequently Asked Questions: Sanitary Drains and Proper Disposal Best Management Practices

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Applies To: University of Michigan employees, staff, and students

What can I pour down the sanitary drains?

Only pour consumable products, such as pop and coffee, and household products down the drain. Be sure to use the household products in the manner intended and to follow the directions for disposal procedures. Other chemical products may interfere with the wastewater treatment process, and can result in a release of polluted water into the Huron River.

The following organizations offer disposal options for chemicals waste generated by individuals at home:

- [Washtenaw County Regional Drop-Off Station](#) (Recycle Ann Arbor)
- [Washtenaw County Home Toxics Center](#)

NOTE: Use of the above disposal options are only intended for wastes generated by individuals at their homes. Wastes generated by U-M related activities must be managed by the U-M Hazardous Materials Management (HMM) team.

What do I do if there is an accidental spill into a drain?

If safe to do so, prevent additional material from entering the drain and immediately call the Department of Public Safety & Security at 763-1131 to report the incident. EHS can assist with the spill cleanup, if needed.

I use chemical products at home, why can't I drain these products at work?

At home, small quantities of cleaning compounds are occasionally used and rinsed down the drain.

At work, a large number of laboratories and operations frequently use numerous and sometimes unusual chemicals. These operations produce a large volume of wastewater that could potentially contain pollutants that may interfere with the wastewater treatment process. There are State and Federal laws which govern management of these wastes generated at businesses.

Are there any wastewater disposal considerations when working outside the buildings?

Yes. Any outside activity that generates chemical waste or runoff has the potential to impact storm water and the environment. Prior to project start, please consult EHS to determine if impacts are anticipated, and to discuss collection and containment options. ALL paints, chemicals, and wash waters that contain chemicals or cleaners must be collected for proper disposal. Tasks include, but are not limited to:

- Activities at loading docks
- Painting
- Cleaning
- Masonry cutting and cleaning
- Washing equipment
- [Powerwashing](#) and any other activity that generates wastewater

Contact HMM to discuss proper collection and disposal of the waste.

Who do I contact for more information?

For information about:

- Hazardous waste collection and disposal, HMM at (734) 763-4568
- Drain disposal or activities outside of buildings, contact the EP3 at (734) 647-1143

How can I find environmentally friendly products, incorporate green chemistry, and minimize waste in my research laboratories?

Contact the [Office of Campus Sustainability](#) for information about green chemistry and becoming a certified sustainable lab.

Where should chemicals be stored when not in use?

- Store chemicals away from sinks
- Keep all hazardous and flammable chemicals in fireproof storage cabinet with the doors securely shut
- Store incompatible materials separately
- Consult your [Chemical Hygiene Plan](#) for additional tips on chemical storage

How do I clean laboratory equipment that is too large for the sink?

If you have chemically contaminated items that are too large to wash in a sink or contain hazardous materials/chemicals, contact Research Health and Safety at (734) 647-1143 or EHS LabSafety@umich.edu to discuss options for cleaning.