

## DISPOSAL OF RAGS AND WIPERS

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### Purpose

The purpose of this Safe Operating Procedure is to describe the proper management of items intended for disposal that are or may be contaminated with solvents, greases, oils, trace metals, and other chemical residues. This SOP is focused on 'disposable' rags, towels or wipes commonly used in shops, art areas, mechanical areas, laboratories and other spaces at UNL. Please direct questions regarding the disposal of any other items that may have chemical contamination or residues directly to EHS.

***Before using a cloth rag laundry service, notify EHS for evaluation of the possible contaminants specific to your operations.*** The use of the cloth rag laundry service at UNL must be approved in writing by EHS because of strict management regulatory requirements that may apply depending on the situation.

### Background

During use, small amounts of chemicals may come in contact with or contaminate items that are ordinarily discarded after each use (i.e., paper towels, cloth rags, wipers, etc.). This contamination may occur as a result of accidental spills or routine cleaning of parts, painting, applying ceramic glazes, cleaning of brakes, cleaning of PVC joints, used oil, gasoline or solvents. Chemically contaminated rags are likely subject to certain disposal restrictions and management standards and should not be disposed of with ordinary refuse.

### Containerizing and Labeling

The best container to use for the collection of used rags is a metal safety can with a self-closing lid, particularly for rags and wipers contaminated with flammable materials. This creates a tight seal to prevent accidental ignition or spontaneous combustion. These cans also have an elevated bottom with ventilated footings to dissipate any heat build-up.

If a metal safety can is not available, any container that is compatible with the chemically contaminated rags can be used as long as it is securely closed at all times except when immediately adding items to the container. Label containers as 'Used Rags' and tag for collection by EHS when full. See EHS SOP, ***Hazardous/Radioactive Material Collection Procedures.***