



**IDAHO
DEPARTMENT OF
ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY**

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Handling Dental Waste

Wastes commonly generated in dental offices include amalgam particles, waste mercury, fixers, developers, x-ray film packets, and chemiclave chemicals. Many of these wastes are designated as hazardous and are subject to special disposal requirements. This guide lists recycling and waste management options for Idaho dentists.

Use a Hazardous Waste Management Company

Many hazardous waste management companies offer services to dental offices for common types of wastes including amalgam, mercury, chemicals, and lead. Most offer pick-up services throughout the state while others located outside of Idaho provide mail-away services. The company will either collect the dental waste for recycling to reclaim any valuable material or will safely treat and dispose of the material as hazardous waste. Some facilities may serve as a collection center only and do not handle the recycling or disposal of waste. As with all hazardous waste, the generator is legally responsible for any material from the time it is generated onward. Contact the individual company to find which service works best for your location. Investigate any firm before entrusting it with waste transportation.

Mail-Away Service

Most of these companies provide containers, shipping, recycling services, and documentation. They can provide packaging requirements and shipping instructions. Contact individual companies for rates and procedures.

Pick-up Services

These companies are located locally in Idaho and will provide a pick-up service for a fee. Contact individual companies for rates and procedures.

Waste-Specific Services

Amalgam

Dental amalgam contains both mercury and silver and therefore must be properly handled. It cannot be mixed with biomedical waste because if incinerated, mercury is released into the air. The waste must never be put in the regular trash; it must be sent to a mercury reclaimer or a hazardous waste management company. Limiting the amount of amalgam used to the smallest appropriate size for each restoration can reduce the amount of waste generated.

Mail-Away Services

Amalgaway, IN – all amalgam wastes	(800) 267-1467
Bethlehem Apparatus Co. Inc., PA – all amalgam wastes	(610) 838-7034
Dental Recycling of North America, NJ – all amalgam wastes	(800) 360-1001
Dental Refiners, NV – offers pick-up services throughout Idaho	(800) 786-1742
Maguire & Strickland Refining Inc., MN – all amalgam wastes	(800) 486-2858
Mercury Refining Company Inc. – only noncontact amalgam	(800) 833-3505
Enviro-Chem Inc.	(763) 428-4002
Mercury Waste Solutions	(800) 644-1434
Medentex , (all amalgam wastes) NJ	(888) 640-2527

Pick-up Services

Able Clean Up Technologies – services northern Idaho only	(509) 466-5255
Safety-Kleen, Boise – services southern, eastern, and central Idaho	(208) 342-8882
Safety-Kleen, Spokane – services northern Idaho	(509) 928-8353
Specialty Environmental Services	(208) 327-9977
Environmental Management Solutions	(208) 895-0326
Chem-Safe Environmental Inc.	(509) 968-3973
PSC Environmental Services	(801) 294-9880

Elementary Mercury

Mercury can be found in dental offices for use in amalgam. It is toxic and should be handled with care. Waste mercury should be disposed of through a licensed mercury reclaimer or hazardous waste management company.

Mail-Away Services

Bethlehem Apparatus Co. Inc., PA – all amalgam wastes	(610) 838-7034
Chem-Safe Environmental	(509) 968-3973
Mercury Waste Solutions (accepts up to 1 pound)	(800) 644-1434
PSC Environmental Services	(801) 294-9880

Pick-up Services

Safety-Kleen, Boise – services southern, eastern, and central Idaho	(208) 342-8882
Safety-Kleen, Spokane – services northern Idaho	(509) 928-8353
Specialty Environmental Services	(208) 327-9977

X-ray Fixer

Used x-ray fixer is a hazardous waste due to its high silver content. It should not be mixed with developer or disposed of down the drain. Instead, the fixer can be sent to a silver reclaimer or hazardous waste management company. Some film companies or photo processing centers will accept the used chemicals for recycling. Another option is to install a silver recovery unit or pay someone who operates one to take the fixer. Check with vendors for more information.

Mail-Away Services

Able Clean Up Technologies – services northern Idaho only	(509) 466-5255
Dental Recycling of North America, NJ	(800) 360-1001
Enviro-Chem Inc.	(763) 428-4002

Pick-up Services

Environmental Management Solutions	(208) 895-0326
Safety-Kleen, Boise – services southern, eastern, and central Idaho	(208) 342-8882
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X-ray Film

Used and unused x-ray film contains silver that should be recycled if no longer needed. Many film suppliers offer recycling programs and may accept the unused film. Check with suppliers for more information. If this service is available, most hazardous waste management companies will accept x-ray film.

Mail-Away Services

Able Clean Up Technologies – services northern Idaho only	(509) 466-5255
Enviro-Chem Inc.	(763) 428-4002
Maguire & Strickland Refining Inc., MN	(800) 486-2858
Dental Recycling of North America, NJ	(800) 360-1001

Pick-up Services

Safety-Kleen, Boise – services southern, eastern, and central Idaho	(208) 342-8882
Safety-Kleen, Spokane – services northern Idaho	(509) 928-8353
Specialty Environmental Services	(208) 327-9977

X-ray Developer

Spent developer alone can usually be disposed of through the wastewater treatment system with permission from your local wastewater authority. Developer should not be disposed of through a septic system. Never mix fixer with developer. Unused developer and developer that has been mixed with fixer should be handled as hazardous waste.

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Lead Foil Packet

Film packets contain lead, a hazardous material that should be disposed of through a metal recycler or as hazardous waste. Many film suppliers accept used foil packets. Some recycling companies may be willing to work with dentists to recover lead from foil packets or lead aprons.

Mail-Away Services

Amalgaway	(800) 267-1467
Dental Recycling of North America, NJ	(800) 360-1001
Maguire & Strickland Refining Inc., MN	(800) 486-2858
Enviro-Chem Inc.	(763) 428-4002
Medentex , NJ	(888) 640-2527

Pick-up Services

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Sterilant Solutions

Depending on concentrations or ingredients, many chemical disinfectant solutions may be classified as hazardous waste. Lab tests, Safety Data Sheets, and vendor information may be helpful in determining the hazardous nature of these wastes. Never discharge sterilant solutions into septic systems, and check with the local wastewater treatment plant to determine if the chemical may be disposed of into the sewer system. Consider switching to autoclave or a less toxic solution. Additionally, only buy and use the amount of sterilant needed.

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Environmental Management Solutions	(208) 895-0326
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Safety-Kleen, Spokane – services northern Idaho	(509) 928-8353
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Additional Resources

Dental Amalgam Traps

Disposable amalgam traps are preferred over reusable traps because it is difficult to clean the reusable traps without releasing amalgam into the sewer or garbage. Disposable traps should be changed weekly or more frequently if needed, or as recommended by the equipment manufacturer. Be sure to flush the vacuum system before changing the chair-side trap. See resources above for dental waste recycling companies.

If reusable amalgam traps are used, take the following steps:

- Disinfect the traps using a minimum amount of disinfectant.
- Remove visible scrap amalgam from the reusable amalgam trap and store it in an airtight container as directed by the waste hauler or recycler.
- Use the appropriate protective equipment when handling amalgam.
- Never rinse the trap over drains or sinks.

Labeling

Properly label the container in which hazardous waste is stored. Label it as *hazardous waste* and include a description of the kind of waste contained. Write the beginning date of filling the container on the label and keep a record of any material sent or delivered to a recycling entity. Always request a *Certificate of Recycling or Disposal*.

More Information

American Dental Association	www.ada.org
Idaho Department of Environmental Quality	www.deq.idaho.gov/dental-assistance
Earth 911 Environmental Hotline	www.earth911.org
Idaho State Dental Association	www.theisda.org/landing.aspx
Hospitals for a Healthy Environment	www.practicegreenhealth.org
Healthcare Without Harm	www.noharm.org
US Environmental Protection Agency	www.epa.gov/mercury/dentalamalgam.html

Choosing a Waste Management Company

Many smaller facilities opt to use a waste management company to handle and dispose of hazardous waste. When generating waste cannot be avoided, protect your business by dealing only with reliable waste management companies. No matter how good the waste management company, remember that no one can take away your liability once you have generated a waste.

When choosing companies to recycle or dispose of hazardous waste, ask the following questions:

- 1. What wastes are accepted?**
- 2. What are the packaging requirements? Are packaging materials provided?**
- 3. Does the company have an EPA identification number and the appropriate permits to transport off site for treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous waste?**
Hazardous waste must be recycled on site or transported off site for treatment, storage, and disposal by a permitted hazardous waste management company.
- 4. Is a hazardous manifest needed for the shipment?** A hazardous waste manifest may be required with off-site shipments of hazardous waste. A manifest is a multiple copy document signed by the waste generator and transporter when the waste is picked up. It is signed every time the waste changes hands. Finally, a representative of the waste disposal or recycling facility signs the manifest. The final copy is then returned to the generator as proof that the waste reached the proper disposal/recycling destination.
- 5. Does the company have insurance to cover accidental spills?** Insurance is the first layer of protection for your business in case of an accident resulting in spills, injury, or property damage.
- 6. What is the cost for services?** If it is a recycling service, does it return or keep recycled products? Choose among reputable waste management companies for the best deal. Pay for good service, not necessarily a brand name.
- 7. Is the company willing to negotiate a contract that fits the office's needs?** A service schedule that fits the needs of a business may help avoid waste generation.
- 8. Does the company follow Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) requirements?** Contact the ITD at (208) 334-8000 for more information on these requirements. The waste management company should have copies and procedures to ensure these requirements are met.

NOTE: DEQ is providing this list of pick-up and mail-away programs as a public service only and does not certify or recommend any contractors on this list. Thoroughly research a firm's qualifications and history before contracting with it.