

**WM-2: Waste Management Emerging Topics**  
Thornell Cheeks, EPA

**Amendment of the Universal  
Waste Rule (UWR)**

To include Pharmaceutical Waste (40  
CFR Part 273)



Thornell Cheeks, EPA Region 4  
RCRA Division

**The Universal Waste Rule**

- *The Universal Waste Rule is a set of special requirements for universal wastes, designed to do three things:*

**The Universal Waste Rule**

*Designed to:*

- *To encourage resource conservation while ensuring adequate protection of human health and the environment.*

**The Universal Waste Rule**

*Designed to:*

2. *To improve implementation of the current RCRA subtitle C hazardous waste regulatory program.*

**The Universal Waste Rule**

*Designed to:*

3. *To simplify the hazardous waste regulatory requirements so as to encourage the collection of these hazardous wastes,*

**The Universal Waste Rule**

*Designed to:*

3. *provide incentives for individuals and organizations to collect the unregulated portion of these waste streams and manage them using the same systems developed for the regulated portion.*

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***Universal Wastes ARE Hazardous Wastes!***

- *Therefore, we are proposing to add hazardous pharmaceutical wastes to the UWR (which is probably about 5% of the drug waste).*

***Universal Wastes ARE Hazardous Wastes!***

- *The proposed rule is written to encourage the handling of non-hazardous pharmaceutical wastes as universal wastes (we only encourage it, it will not be required).*

**Federal Universal Waste**

- *Current Federal universal wastes include: batteries, pesticides, mercury-containing equipment and lamps*

**Federal Universal Waste**

- *However, states that are authorized to implement the UWR may add hazardous wastes to their own lists of universal wastes, even if EPA has not added that particular waste to the federal UW program*

**The Amendment**

- *The, to be proposed, amendment will streamline the current regulations governing these wastes, ensuring that hazardous pharmaceutical wastes are properly managed.*

**The Amendment**

- *Inclusion of hazardous pharmaceutical wastes in the universal waste rule is expected to provide relief in the management of hazardous pharmaceutical wastes by simplifying current requirements of large quantity generators.*

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**The Amendment**

- *It will also encourage health care personnel to manage other pharmaceutical wastes as universal wastes, particularly those wastes that are not regulated as hazardous but which nonetheless may pose hazards.*

**The Amendment**

- *Addition of hazardous pharmaceutical wastes to the rule will facilitate pharmaceutical take-back programs so that these wastes can be properly managed.*

**The Amendment**

- *The proposed addition of hazardous pharmaceutical wastes to the UWR is expected to be signed by the administrator in November 2008, with publication in the Federal Register expected to occur in December 2008.*

**The Amendment**

- *Once published, there will be a 60-day comment period in which EPA will take comments from the public on the proposal. After the comment period, EPA will begin work on addressing the comments and drafting the final rule.*

**The Amendment**

- *It is expected that the final rule will be published in 2010-2011. Once finalized, the states authorized to implement the UWR will need to decide whether or not to add hazardous pharmaceutical wastes to their own universal waste programs.*