

**UNIVERSITY OF HOUSTON
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND RISK MANAGEMENT
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

SECTION: ENVIRONMENTAL SAFETY

SUBJECT: Environmental Awareness

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to inform the University community of the importance in complying with applicable environmental regulations. There are numerous rules that cover such areas as hazardous waste, industrial solid waste, air emissions, petroleum storage tanks (both aboveground and underground), water pollution prevention enforced by the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The University is similar to a small city in that it is subject to all of the major air, water, waste and storage tank regulations promulgated by the TCEQ and EPA. In addition the City of Houston regulates the grease, lint or grit traps on campus and the Texas Department of Health regulates asbestos containing material (ACM) in public (campus) buildings. Failure to comply with these requirements carries both criminal and civil penalties that can be assessed against both the University and if warranted individuals within the University.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY TERMS

City of Houston (COH): The COH Environmental Health Division regulates grease, lint and grit traps throughout the main campus. These traps have to be registered with the COH and waste generated from these traps has to be removed by a licensed contractor to a permitted disposal facility.

Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): The CFR is a compilation of the federal regulatory agency rules. The environmental rules promulgated by EPA are in part 40 of the CRF.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): The federal agency that regulates protection of the environment. EPA rules encompass all major environmental media (i.e. air, water, tanks, etc.) and set a minimum standard for states to follow.

Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ): The lead state environmental agency in Texas. Their regulations usually follow EPA, but in some cases are more stringent. TCEQ is the primary enforcement agency in the state.

Texas Department of Health (TDH): The lead public health agency in the state. Among issues they regulate is ACM which is commonly found in campus

buildings.

III. PROCEDURES

The following is a generalized list of most frequent potential environmental issues that members of the UH community may face during their daily routines.

Please contact the Environmental Health and Risk Management Department (EHRM) at (713) 743-5858 with specific questions for concerns not found in this list *before* undertaking any activity that may trigger a non-compliance situation.

1. All hazardous waste, industrial solid waste (non hazardous), biological waste and radioactive must be managed through the EHRM waste program.
2. All laboratory waste must be managed through the EHRM waste program unless specific arrangements and prior approval from the EHRM are made.
3. Fume hoods are not to be used to evaporate waste solvents away rather the Online Hazardous Waste Pickup Request Form should be used.
4. Sharps (needles, small vials) wastes must be placed in the appropriate (biological, radioactive etc.) sharps container and are not to be thrown in the trash basket.
5. Laboratory sinks are for washing “empty” equipment and not for disposal of liquid waste.
6. The general refuse (i.e. trash) dumpsters are for empty containers, papers, packaging material etc and are not for liquid wastes, fluorescent light bulbs, used tires or used oil.
7. Broken glass should be boxed up, secured and thrown in the general refuse dumpster.
8. Report any spills or releases of suspected contaminants to the EHRM at (713) 743-5858 during regular business hours and to UH Police outside of normal business hours at (713) 743-3333.
10. Changing automotive oil and discharging it to the sewer system is a violation of the Clean Water Act and should be reported directly to UH Police.
11. New sources of potential air emissions such as laboratory fume hoods must be approved in advance and before construction by the EHRM.

12. Discovery of underground storage during a construction project must be reported immediately to the EHRM.

13. Building occupants must be informed in advance of any asbestos abatement work in their respective building.

14. Regulatory officials are to be directly to the EHRM upon arrival on campus.

IV. REFERENCES

Title 31, Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Texas Environmental Regulations, (Texas Commission on Environmental Quality), most recent edition.

Title 40, Code of Federal Regulations, Protection of the Environment, (US Environmental Protection Agency), most recent edition