

What we all need to know about Universal Wastes

What are universal wastes?

Universal wastes are wastes that contain hazardous materials such as mercury, lead and other heavy metals, and are commonly found in homes, businesses and schools. The list of universal wastes includes:



- **CRTs** — Cathode ray tubes in computer monitors and TVs.
- **Batteries** — Metal hydride, nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cad), small sealed lead acid, lithium and mercuric and silver oxide button batteries.
- **Mercury switches and devices** — Mercury devices include fever and cooking thermometers, thermostats, weather barometers and blood pressure cuffs. Mercury switches can be found in sump pumps, old chest freezers, and some gas appliances.
- **Lamps** — Fluorescent, neon, mercury vapor, metal halide, high intensity discharge, and high pressure sodium lamps. Basically all light bulbs except an old-fashioned incandescent!
- **PCB ballasts** — Usually found in old fluorescent lighting fixtures.



Why should we care?

Universal wastes contain heavy metals, such as mercury and lead, that are harmful to our health and the environment. Maine has fish consumption advisories due to mercury pollution. CRTs are the largest source of lead in the waste stream today. PCBs are known to cause cancer in humans. Proper management protects all of us, our wildlife and our environment.

For more information call Maine DEP, Solid Waste Program at 1-800-452-1942.



What are your responsibilities for universal waste?

The Maine legislature has passed laws that require homeowners to recycle most universal wastes, rather than dispose of them. Mercury-added products from households must be recycled starting 1/1/05, and CRTs must be recycled starting 1/1/06. PCB ballasts should also be collected separately from other household trash so that they can be destroyed at high heat in a special hazardous waste incinerator.



How do you properly recycle your universal wastes?

Each town is responsible for ensuring there is a place for residents to recycle their universal wastes. Many towns already accept homeowner universal wastes at their solid waste facility or recycling center. Other towns contract with a business to collect homeowner universal wastes at their business location or at the resident's curbside.

If you have universal waste keep it separate from other trash and call your town office, solid waste facility or recycling center for more information on their universal waste program. Be sure to ask :

- Where can I take my universal wastes for recycling?
- When is that facility open for universal waste drop-offs?
- Is there a fee? If so, how much?

If you have curbside pick-up:

You should speak with your town office or waste hauler to make sure that he or she will accept your universal waste and will transport it, unbroken, for recycling.

Town Phone: _____

Hauler's Phone: _____

UW acceptance times: _____