



Formalin Disposal for Laboratories

Formalin is the most common form of formaldehyde found in laboratories. It is primarily used to preserve biological specimens and may contain up to 40% formaldehyde. Formalin presents health and safety concerns when handled incorrectly, and presents environmental and legal concerns when disposed incorrectly.

The City of Phoenix recommends that laboratories consider purchasing and using non-formalin solutions as a Best Management and Pollution Prevention Practice.

DISPOSAL OF FORMALIN

Spent formalin when discarded is a hazardous waste, and care must be taken when disposing or neutralizing this material to ensure that human health and the environment are protected.

Products are available that will neutralize formalin solutions containing 10% or less formaldehyde and render them non-hazardous. Neutralization will reduce formalin solutions to less than 0.1% and neutralize the pH to 6-9 SU. Other products are available which convert the neutralized solutions into a solid safe for landfill disposal. For personal safety, ensure that you comply with procedures and safety information included with the instructions for these products.

DISPOSAL OPTIONS

- Hire a professional hazardous waste contractor to assist with disposal of formalin.
- **NEVER** dilute solutions of formalin using water as a substitute for treatment with the intent of drain disposal. Diluting solutions of formalin greater than 10% with water and then neutralizing them is prohibited. Formalin solutions having concentrations greater than 10% must be disposed of as hazardous waste.
- **NEVER** dispose of formalin down the drain without neutralizing it, and **DO NOT** pour neutralized formalin down the drain without authorization from the local Publicly Owned Treatment Works (POTW). Formalin contains methyl alcohol, a biocide which could harm the "good" bacteria in the wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). Contact your local POTW to discuss compatibility with the WWTP.
- Neutralization of formalin for discharge to sewer falls under "treatment by generator". As such, Federal, State, and Local laws all require documentation of onsite hazardous waste treatment via use of a **Chemical Waste Treatment Log**. This log is a record of chemical waste treatment and it must be kept onsite for a minimum of three (3) years.