



Best Management Practices for Dental Offices

Amalgam waste must **NEVER** be placed in the regular trash, placed with infectious (red bag) waste, or flushed down the drain or toilet. Amalgam waste includes contact amalgam such as extracted teeth containing amalgam restorations; noncontact or scrap amalgam; used, leaking, or unusable amalgam capsules; and amalgam captured by chair-side traps, vacuum pumps screens, and other devices, including the traps, filters, and screens themselves.

The ADA strongly recommends recycling as a best management practice for dental offices.

1. Eliminate all use of bulk elemental mercury (also referred to as liquid or raw mercury). Any bulk elemental mercury must be recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste. Use only pre-capsulated dental amalgam in the smallest appropriate size; keep a variety of amalgam capsules on hand to more closely match the amount needed in a restoration.
2. Change or empty chair-side traps frequently and store the trap and its contents with amalgam waste. Never rinse traps in the sink. If you have reusable traps, make sure any material you use to clean the trap is disposed of with amalgam waste.
3. Do not use sodium hypochlorite (bleach) or other chlorine containing products to cleanse vacuum lines, as these products have been shown to release the mercury in the amalgam. Information on line cleaners and their effect on amalgam waste can be found at <http://www.sanjoseca.gov/esd/wastewater/dental-amalgam-program.asp>
4. Change vacuum pump filters and screens as needed or as directed by the manufacturer and store with amalgam waste. Seal and store filters and screens, as well as their contents (including any water that may be present) with amalgam waste in an airtight container.
5. For dry vacuum turbine units, have a qualified maintenance technician, amalgam recycler, or hazardous waste disposal service pump out and clean the air-water separator tank at least once every six months. Perform this service more frequently if necessary to maintain suction or if so directed by the vacuum system manufacturer.

6. Have a licensed recycling contractor, mail-in-service, or hazardous waste hauler remove your amalgam waste or bring amalgam waste to the Santa Clara County Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators Program. Recycling is the preferred method for discarding amalgam waste.
7. Maintain written or computerized logs of amalgam waste generated and of amalgam waste removed from the vacuum system or plumbing. In addition, obtain receipts or other certified documentation from your recycler or hauler of all amalgam waste recycling or disposal shipments. Keep these receipts on file for at least five years and make them available to authorized City of San José Environmental Inspectors upon request.
8. Store amalgam waste in airtight containers. Follow recycler's or hauler's instructions for disinfection of waste and separation of contact and non-contact amalgam. Do not use disinfectant solutions with oxidizers, such as bleach, to disinfect the amalgam.
9. Use a licensed hauler to transport spent fixer solution to be recycled or managed as a hazardous waste, or personally deliver it to the Santa Clara County Conditionally Exempt Small Quantity Generators Program. Never pour fixer solution down the drain.
10. Train staff in proper handling, management, and disposal of mercury-containing material and fixer solutions. Maintain a training log and keep this log for at least five years. This log must be made available to authorized City of San José Environmental Inspectors.