

EPA's New Solvent-Contaminated Wipes Rule, [This New Regulatory Exemption Codifies Former Guidance.](#)

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[EPA recently issued a Final Rule on July 22, 2013, which codifies former guidance by providing on exclusion from RCRA for solvent-contaminated industrial wipes which are managed in certain ways. The former EPA guidance permitted cloth wipes which were laundered or sent for drycleaning to be excluded from hazardous waste as an article in common under the solid waste exclusion of 40 CFR section 261.4\(a\)\(26\)m \(in effect reusable wipes never enter the RCRA program\), while solvent contaminated disposable wipes will be excluded under the hazardous waste exclusion of 40 CFR section 261.\(b\)\(18\). EPA's July 2013 final rule makes disposing of solvent-contaminated wipes easier and possibly less costly. Now the wipes are "conditionally excluded" from the definition of hazardous waste, meaning they can be sent to a landfill or combustor for disposal or laundered and re-used, if they are managed according to the specific management standards described in the rule.](#)

Only wipes that are contaminated with solvents are eligible for the exemption; wipes that are contaminated with listed hazardous wastes other than solvents, or that exhibit the characteristic of toxicity, corrosivity, or reactivity must continue to be managed as hazardous wastes. [PMA provided a guidance memorandum 10 years ago recommending the use of cloth towels to avoid RCRA regulation. The current regulation goes beyond the former guidance allowing the disposal of some paper wipes impacted with solvents. PMA cautions that disposal of solvent continental wipes in a landfill may result in future clean-up liability under state and federal law.](#)

To qualify for the exemption, solvent-contaminated wipes must be managed by:

- Storing them in closed containers;
- Labeling the container "Excluded Solvent-Contaminated Wipes";
- Keeping containers in good condition (no leaks);
- Keeping away from potentially incompatible wastes or ignition sources;
- Accumulating for 180 days or less;
- Removing any free liquids before sending wipes for cleaning or disposal (Free liquids must be managed as hazardous wastes.). The Paint Filter Liquids Test (Method 9095B) is used for determining whether solvent-contaminated wipes contain no free liquids.
- Sending wipes to regulated laundries, dry cleaners, solid waste combustors, or municipal solid landfills.

In addition, generators with solvent-contaminated wipes must document how they manage the wipes.

This recordkeeping includes:

- The name and address of the laundry, dry cleaner, landfill, or combustor where the wipes were ultimately sent;
- Proof of meeting the 180-day limit; and
- A description of the process used to meet the "no free liquids" condition.

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If managed correctly, the exemption can save companies lots of money by allowing the reuse of shop rags or disposal at nonhazardous waste handling facilities. However, individual states may choose not to adopt the new rule. Businesses will want to confirm their state allows the exemption before changing how they manage their solvent-contaminated wipes.

For more information use the following links:

Solvent-Contaminated Wipes Final Rule Summary Chart (pdf):

http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/wastetypes/wasteid/solvents/sumry_chrt_wipes_fnl_rul_070913.pdf

Solvent-Contaminated Wipes Rulemaking:

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/wastetypes/wasteid/solvents/wipes.htm>

EPA Press Release:

<http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceac8525735900400c27/c8f3d2b0b740904b85257bb0005cfd6d!OpenDocument>

2013 Solvent-Contaminated Wipes Final Rule: Frequent Questions:

http://www.epa.gov/osw/hazard/wastetypes/wasteid/solvents/wipes_faq.htm
