

Evaporating Waste Solvents



A fairly common lab practice in the past was to get rid of spent solvents by evaporating them in a fume hood. We don't see that much anymore at UAB because of regulations and policies that prohibit the practice.

However, a recent incident indicates that there are isolated cases of waste evaporation still occurring. Last month, a PI contacted OH&S to complain about an odor that was permeating his lab and the source could not be located. Our investigation revealed that a lab down the hall had closed and the investigator had left UAB. She had decided to get rid of her xylene, a hazardous waste, by pouring it into a large pan placed in the fume hood and allowing it to evaporate. The large amount of xylene involved overwhelmed the fume hood, creating fugitive emissions that migrated to the lab that had initially complained about the odor.

Evaporating spent solvents is considered unauthorized treatment/disposal of hazardous waste without a permit. If State or federal regulators had discovered this was happening during an inspection, it would have resulted in a significant fine for the University as well as adverse publicity. Please inform your staff not to do this. It does not save money or time – OH&S will pick up all of your hazardous waste faster than you can evaporate it **without exposing anyone to the fumes or charging your lab for the service**. Remember, there is a reason it is called "hazardous waste".

If you have any questions about proper management and storage of chemicals, including chemical/hazardous waste, please call OH&S at 934-2487 or visit our website here:

uab.edu/ohs