

# Universal Waste Management

## What is Universal Waste?

The term "universal waste" refers to a group of discarded hazardous wastes that are generated by households and businesses. Items such as appliances, batteries, electronic devices, light bulbs, and used aerosol cans. Millions of tons of universal waste are dumped in domestic and foreign landfills each year. SJSU takes great care to appropriately manage universal wastes and recycles it to reduce environmental burden.

## Are Universal Wastes Hazardous?

Universal wastes have a lower health risk to individuals and the environment compared to other hazardous wastes but are much more commonly found in our homes and workplaces. Guidelines for handling and recycling are set by federal and state regulations that also define what products are considered universal wastes. Batteries (e.g., alkaline, lead acid, lithium, nickel cadmium), light tubes and bulbs of all types, mercury devices (e.g., thermostats, thermometers), and used aerosol cans are all examples of commonly found universal wastes.

## What Should You Do with Your Old Electronic Devices?

Recycle your electronic device and all universal wastes. Approximately, only 12.5% of universal waste is being recycled worldwide.

## How Can You Minimize the Amount of Universal Waste Generated?

### REDUCE

- Resist purchasing the latest electronic devices because your old devices become waste.
- Upgrade functional computers and electronic devices wherever possible rather than replace them.
- Choose durable, long-lasting products and avoid the disposable, non-recyclable ones.

### REUSE

- Don't simply dispose of old electronics in the regular trash. If you no longer want an item, find someone else who may need it.

### RECYCLE

- Request a universal waste pick-up by contacting EH&S at [ehs@sjsu.edu](mailto:ehs@sjsu.edu) or **(408) 924-1969** for small amounts or by contacting FD&O at [workcontrol@sjsu.edu](mailto:workcontrol@sjsu.edu) or **(408) 924-1990** for larger amounts and large items.

## Important to Remember

- Universal wastes must NOT be disposed of in the regular trash! It is against the law and harms the environment and water supplies.
- ALWAYS reuse universal wastes if possible. Recycle universal wastes if unwanted, damaged, or broken.
- Contact EH&S at [ehs@sjsu.edu](mailto:ehs@sjsu.edu) or **(408) 924-1969** for information on proper waste management and disposal.
- For more information about managing universal wastes, visit the [Universal Waste Management](#) page.
- For more information about recycling, visit Office of Sustainability's [Waste Management](#) page and FD&O's [Recycling & Waste Management](#) page.

## References

- DTSC: [Universal Waste and How to Handle It Fact Sheet](#)

