



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NEWS RELEASE

Department of Toxic Substances Control

T-09-98
April 8, 1998
For Immediate Release

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DTSC Announces RSU Waste Classifications Based on Risk

SACRAMENTO -- Citing the need to improve the way that California regulates and manages hazardous waste based on the risk it poses to public health and the environment, the California Environmental Protection Agency's Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Director Jesse R. Huff today announced a new system of hazardous waste classifications and disposal options that is being proposed under the DTSC Regulatory Structure Update (RSU) process.

"The new system reflects sound science, knowledge and the experience DTSC has acquired over many years of regulatory experience," said Huff. "The classifications are based on the most current scientific data, and they will enable us to create a clearly-defined risk-based system of hazardous waste management in California."

The RSU is a comprehensive review and refocusing of California's system for identifying and regulating the management of hazardous waste. The RSU Waste Classification package has been forwarded to the National Academy of Science for peer review and will also undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment and public review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) before adoption into regulations.

The new system divides hazardous wastes into two tiers:

Hazardous waste -- which will continue to be fully regulated and;
Special waste -- which are determined to be adequately regulated with reduced handling, treatment and disposal requirements, (including disposal in non-hazardous waste landfills with the approval of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) and the Integrated Waste Management Board (IWMB). A DTSC variance for "special waste" will no longer be necessary as the special waste tier is self-implementing.

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When the proposed classifications are applied to all of the waste streams considered in the process, approximately 70 percent maintain their current status as either hazardous or non-hazardous. Of the remaining 30 percent approximately 40 percent will be re-classified from hazardous to either special waste or non-hazardous and the other 60 percent will move from non-hazardous into the regulatory system.

Under the new system, photographic silver wastes, previously captured under the California waste codes, that do not exceed the federal Resource Conservation Recovery Act (RCRA) limit, will no longer be regulated. However, based on the risk to public health and the environment, dioxin, arsenic, vinyl chloride and lead will be regulated more conservatively in the new system.

“We have learned a lot since the 1980's,” said Huff. “We now know that some waste classifications resulted in unnecessary regulation, others underestimated the risk. The new classification system will enable DTSC to manage waste based on the level of risk thereby more effectively and efficiently protecting public health and the environment.”

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