



Fact Sheet For Dry Cleaners

There are approximately 30,000 dry cleaners in the U.S., employing 200,000 people in the dry cleaning industry providing garment cleaning, finishing and related services to most households. Most dry cleaning operations are family owned and employs an average of five people.

The majority of dry cleaners still use Perchloroethylene or Tetrachloroethylene aka Perc (PCE) to dry clean clothes; because of its effectiveness at cleaning and the high cost to replace or retrofit dry cleaning machines. PCE is a suspected carcinogen that has been found in over 65% of the EPA's Superfund sites awaiting cleanup. This has led to increased regulation of PCE in order to reduce exposures and releases of PCE into the environment.

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) Requirements

Dry cleaners using PCE are hazardous waste generators and are required by law to:

- Must send your hazardous waste to a RCRA permitted disposal facility.
- Must send your hazardous waste through licensed RCRA transporters, with DOT approved certifications.
- Manage on site in proper containers until it is received by a licensed disposal facility. You are responsible for your hazardous waste until it is received by the disposal facility. So choose your transporter and disposal facilities carefully.
- Check with your municipality to see if PCE contact water is allowed to go down the sewer.
- Any waste that contacts the PCE is also considered a hazardous waste and will have to be disposed of as a hazardous waste.
- You can only accumulate up to 2200 lbs of hazardous waste per year on site in order to stay below the Small Quantity Generator (SQG) requirements.

Best Management Practices

- The Department recommends that you keep all disposal records in case issues of liability come up in the future.
- Use secondary containment and have a spill kit ready in order to minimize spills.
- Keep products and wastes separate.
- Keep all containers labeled, in good condition and closed when not in use.

Pollution Prevention

- Upgrade to more efficient dry-cleaning equipment.
- Follow manufacturer's recommended maintenance schedule in order to keep dry-cleaning equipment running efficiently.
- Good housekeeping practices will help reduce any non-hazardous wastes from mixing with the PCE waste.

Alternatives to PCE for Dry Cleaning

Since PCE is now heavily regulated, many technologies have become more common.

- Machine wet cleaning. Uses traditional soap/water in a gentler machine and a more uniform airflow dryer.
- Stoddard Solvent- has a flash point < 140⁰ F and will have to be handled as hazardous waste.
- Hydrocarbon Solvents (with a flash point > 140⁰ F) examples include: DF-2000, Shell 140 and EcoSolv.
- Green Earth (Siloxane) is a silicone based solvent.
- Liquid CO₂ – uses a non-toxic liquid media.

Emerging technologies

- Rynex Solvent – is a non-petroleum based solvent and is supposed to be biodegradable.
- Biotex Solvent- can be used in a modified perc machine.
- Ultra sonic – uses a non-toxic liquid media and sonic vibrations to break up the stains.