

## TOPIC: Characteristic Hazardous Wastes

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A generator will frequently find that a waste is not a "listed" waste. When this occurs, the next step in the hazardous waste determination is to see if the waste exhibits one or more of the characteristics of a hazardous waste.

A hazardous waste characteristic is a property that indicates that a waste poses a sufficient threat to deserve regulation as hazardous. The EPA tried to identify characteristics that when present in a waste can cause death or illness in humans or pose a substantial hazard to the environment. The EPA also decided that the presence of any characteristic of hazardous waste should be detectable using a standardized test method or by applying general knowledge of the waste. The EPA believed that unless generators were provided with widely available and uncomplicated test methods for determining whether their wastes exhibited hazardous characteristics, this system of identifying hazardous wastes would be impractical.

Given these criteria, EPA only finalized four hazardous waste characteristics. These characteristics are a necessary supplement to the hazardous waste listings. They provide a screening mechanism that waste handlers must apply to all wastes from all industries. The characteristics provide a more inclusive means of identifying hazardous wastes than the hazardous waste listings.

### Characteristics

The four characteristics of hazardous waste are:

- Ignitability
- Corrosivity
- Reactivity
- Toxicity

The regulations explaining these characteristics and the test methods to be used in detecting their presence are found in Part 261, Subpart C.

Although waste handlers can use the test methods to determine whether a waste displays characteristics, they are not required to do so. A generator of waste may apply knowledge of the waste's properties to determine if it exhibits a characteristic, instead of sending the waste for expensive laboratory testing.

As with listed wastes, characteristic wastes are assigned waste codes.

Ignitable, corrosive, and reactive wastes carry the waste codes D001, D002, and D003, respectively.

Wastes displaying the characteristic of toxicity can carry the waste codes D004 through D043.

A characteristic waste carries as many waste codes as characteristics it exhibits.

The waste characteristics will be discussed individually in the coming briefings.