



University of Pittsburgh

Department of Environmental Health and Safety

Guidelines for Ethidium Bromide Disposal

Although ethidium bromide is not regulated as a hazardous waste, its mutagenic properties may present a human health hazard if it is placed in the trash or poured down the sanitary sewer system. Use the following procedures when disposing of ethidium bromide solutions, gels, and ethidium bromide contaminated materials.

Ethidium Bromide Solutions

- Do not discard ethidium bromide gels or ethidium bromide solutions containing organic solvents or alcohol down the sewer. Aqueous solutions containing $< 10 \mu\text{g/ml}$ (10 ppm) may be released to the sanitary sewer.
- Aqueous solutions containing $> 10\mu\text{g/ml}$ ethidium bromide must be treated (S&S extractor with charcoal filter, or the Green Bag method) prior to sewer disposal or the solutions may be disposed of via the University's Chemical Waste Program. If the material is going to be treated, the solution can be filtered. Once the solution is filtered, pour the filtrate down the drain, place the filter in a sealed plastic bag (**do not use red bags**) and place a WASTE CHEMICALS label on it. The filter and the ethidium bromide should be disposed of through the Chemical Waste Program (call 4-8952 to schedule a pick up).

Gels Containing Ethidium Bromide

- Place gels in sturdy plastic bags, then place the bag in a cardboard box. Use an orange Chemical Waste label, identify as "Ethidium Bromide gel", and process through the Chemical Waste Program.
- Dry gels should also handled in this manner

Gloves and Contaminated Debris

- Gloves and paper towels that are visibly contaminated with ethidium bromide should be placed in a bag (**do not use red bags**) or box. Label the container to identify the material and dispose through the Chemical Waste Program.

Glassware

- Test tubes contaminated with ethidium bromide should be emptied prior to disposal. Dispose of the liquid according to the above procedures. Visibly contaminated test tubes should be washed with bleach prior to disposal in a broken glass box.

Sharps

- Contaminated sharps and needles contaminated with ethidium bromide should be disposed into sharps containers. An orange CHEMICAL WASTE label must be placed on the sharps container to identify the contents.

Note: no hazardous materials should be poured down the drain or placed in the trash.

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