



South Orange County Wastewater Authority

SOCWA Dental Amalgam Rule Requirements

The EPA finalized technology-based Effluent Limitations for wastewater from Dental Facilities under 40 CFR Part 441. The Rule was effective as of July 14, 2017 and aims to reduce and eliminate mercury-laden amalgam wastewater from dental offices to POTWs. A final copy of the Rule can be found on the EPA's website here: <https://www.epa.gov/eg/dental-effluent-guidelines>

Mercury entering POTWs frequently partitions into bio-solids, the solid material that remains after wastewater is treated. Mercury from waste amalgam can then make its way into the environment from the POTW through landfilling, land application of bio-solids, or through surface water discharge. In addition, the mercury can be released into the aquatic environment where bacteria can change mercury into methylmercury, a highly toxic form of mercury that bioaccumulates in fish and shellfish. Removing mercury when it is in a concentrated and easy to manage form in dental amalgam, before it becomes diluted, difficult and costly to remove, is a common-sense step to prevent mercury from being released into the environment where it can become a hazard to humans. EPA expects compliance with this final rule will reduce the discharge of mercury to POTWs by at least 5.1 tons per year.

The finalized Rule requires dental offices to comply with requirements based on practices recommended by the American Dental Association, including the use of amalgam separators. Once captured by the separator, dental amalgam can be recycled.

All dental facilities whose first discharge to a POTW occurs **on or after** July 14, 2017, are considered **New Sources** under the Rule and must fill out and submit a Dental Discharger One-Time Compliance Report to SOCWA within 90 days of its first sewer discharge. All dental facilities whose first discharge to a POTW occurred **before** July 14, 2017, are considered **Existing Sources** and have three years (by July 14, 2020) to comply with the Rule and submit the Report to SOCWA by October 12, 2020. An Existing Source that changes ownership is required to submit a new compliance report within 90 days.



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Here is a summary of what the Rule requires:

1. All dental offices are required to submit a one-time compliance report to their Control Authority, SOCWA.
 - a. Existing Sources must submit this report to SOCWA by October 12, 2020.
 - b. New Sources have 90 days from their first discharge to sewer to submit report to SOCWA.
2. The following best management practices (BMPs) are required to be in place and practiced by every dental facility.
 - a. Appropriately certified and sized amalgam separators must be put in place and maintained in accordance with the manufacture directions.
 - b. Waste amalgam including, but not limited to, dental amalgam from chair-side traps, screens, vacuum pump filters, dental tools, cuspidors, or collection devices, must not be discharged to sewer facilities.
 - c. Dental unit water lines, chair-side traps, and vacuum lines that discharge amalgam process wastewater to a publicly owned treatment works (e.g., municipal sewage system) must not be cleaned with oxidizing or acidic cleaners, including but not limited to bleach, chlorine, iodine and peroxide that have a pH lower than 6 or greater than 8 (i.e. cleaners that may increase the dissolution of mercury).

If you are a dental facility which practices within SOCWA's jurisdiction, please download and submit to SOCWA the One-Time Compliance Report found here: [Dental-Discharger-one-time-compliance-report SOCWA](#)