

Perchloroethylene at Dry Cleaners

Perchloroethylene (PCE, perc, or tetrachloroethene) has been used as an efficient and effective dry cleaning solvent since the 1930s. However, perc is a harmful carcinogen that can cause public health risks and costly cleanups enforced through State and Federal regulatory programs.

Unfortunately, dry cleaners have a history of being a common source of soil and groundwater contamination. Don't become one of them!

Health Concerns



Carcinogenic perc vapors in soil and groundwater can migrate upward into buildings.



Perc can migrate into aquifers used for drinking water.

Cleanup Costs

Perc contamination can stay in the environment for as long as 100 years before degrading. Perc migrates downward in groundwater over time, creating complex remediation projects.

Dry Cleaning Regulations

Hazardous waste regulations originate primarily from the 1976 Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, or RCRA, and they are generally based on the amount of hazardous waste produced.

Dry cleaners are commonly categorized as "very small quantity generators" (or VSQGs), meaning they produce no more than 220 lbs. of hazardous waste per month.

Some dry cleaners may be categorized as "small quantity generators" (or SQGs), meaning they produce no more than 2,200 lbs. of hazardous waste.

Generator categories are detailed in [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 40, Section 262.13](#).

Hazardous Waste Transporter Requirement

All generators must use hazardous waste transporters for disposal. You can find hazardous waste transporters at azdeq.gov/hazwaste-resources.

Preventing Perc Contamination: Best Management Practices

- Store drums of waste perc on **secondary containment** and keep waste drums closed at all times, except when in immediate use.
- Store spill kits next to dry cleaning equipment and drums of waste perc.
- Follow routine machine maintenance.
- Regularly inspect machines for perc liquid or vapor leaks.

- Upgrade to more efficient machines when possible.
- Label containers with perc as "Hazardous Waste" and "Toxic."
- Do not discharge waste into drains or washes – it is illegal and will incur enforcement action.
- Ensure disposal follows hazardous waste regulations.
- Consider using alternative solvents like volatile methyl siloxane, high flashpoint hydrocarbons, acetal, or propylene glycol ethers.



Know your RCRA generator status: One-third of a drum is about 220 lbs. of perc

Questions?

We are here to help. Contact us at hazardouswaste@azdeq.gov.