

1. Purpose

This SOP has been generated to provide guidance on how to recycle non-hazardous and non-regulated waste from Emory University Rollins School of Public Health research and teaching laboratories as a companion to the [Emory University 2018 waste management policy](#).

2. Scope

Rollins School of Public Health wet labs, dry labs, and clinical laboratory spaces used for teaching and research are within the scope of this SOP. University labs used for patient care are included, but Emory Healthcare labs are not.

Disposal of regulated and hazardous materials does not change with this SOP. Please note that some materials previously placed in landfill bins might now be recyclable. Please consult the detailed [Lab Recycling Process Map](#) for more information on how to sort laboratory waste.

3. Background

In January 2018, Emory University implemented a new waste policy to help Emory achieve our goal of 95% diversion of waste from landfills by 2025. Please take a moment to [view the video overview of the policy](#), and refer to the [website for more information and FAQs](#).

Laboratory recycling through the Green Labs at Emory program was piloted in 2015; approximately 45 labs are currently recycling their materials by sorting them into hallway containers.

4. Procedure

Standard waste collection stations that comply with Emory's 2018 Waste Policy shall be located in each laboratory, with official signage and labels specific to laboratory waste streams. Laboratory occupants shall sort waste into the appropriate bins, and custodial staff shall service these standard stations.

Landfill bins in each lab shall be limited to one bin in each standard waste station. Landfill bins that are included in standard waste stations shall be serviced by custodial staff, as long as these bins are the compliant equipment and clearly marked with labels affixed by Campus Services. Any desk-side landfill bins used for waste that is personal or not bench-related is discouraged, but if exists must be self-sorted by lab personnel into collection stations. Landfill waste in research labs primarily consists of ice/gel packs, Pyrex, and borosilicate glass.

Labels affixed by Campus Services will clearly mark existing bins as Compost containers for disposal of paper towels and other allowed organic (compostable) items only.

Each laboratory will receive training on proper waste sorting and participation in the [Green Labs at Emory certification program](#).

5. References

To request refresher or recurring training for your lab group, or for questions regarding the policy or sustainability goals and initiatives, contact Emory's Office of Sustainability Initiatives at 404.727.9916 or at emorysustainability@emory.edu. For questions related to operations, please contact Emory Recycles at recycling@emory.edu.

For answers to frequently asked questions and benchmarking information, visit [the Office of Sustainability's Laboratory Landfill Diversion web page](#).

6. Rationale

Emory's goal to divert 95% of its waste from municipal landfills stems from the negative social, economic, and environmental impact that landfills have on public health. These implications disproportionately affect historically disadvantaged communities in the Atlanta metro area.

60% of purchases made by Emory University are for scientific equipment and supplies, much of which is disposable and ends up in Emory's waste streams.

Other members of the Association of American Universities have successfully implemented comprehensive landfill diversion and waste self-sorting programs, including Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, University of Colorado Boulder, Penn State University, and the University of Kansas.

7. Definitions

Green Labs at Emory program – this program was established in 2015 and is administered by Emory's Office of Sustainability Initiatives in collaboration with Campus Services, EHSO, Procurement, and other stakeholder departments. This voluntary program encourages the implementation of sustainable practices in Emory labs, and offers funding each year for innovative project implementation in certified labs.

Landfill bins – containers that collect waste that is sent to landfills, as opposed to being recycled or composted. Emory works with a variety of vendors to support the recycling and composting of its non-regulated waste stream. This means that very few items need to be placed in landfill bins, and their use should be minimized.

Compost – the highest volume of compostable materials that come from labs are used paper towels. When materials are composted, they decompose into soil amendments used for growing food and landscaping. All waste and products made from once-living organisms, such as plant and animal parts that are not regulated, should be placed into compost bins.