

Amalgam Separators Updated (4/14)

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Question: What is the purpose of an Amalgam Separator and which do you recommend?

Answer: Amalgam separators help to remove dental amalgam particles that contain mercury from the effluent in dental vacuum lines. There are different types of separator systems, centrifugal, sedimentation, filtration, ion exchange or any combination of these methods. Amalgam separators listed as ISO 11143 compliant should be capable of removing at least 95% (mass fraction) of amalgam particles. Some states require that the separator have the ability to achieve 99% removal efficiency. Only ISO 11143 compliant amalgam separators should be purchased. Selecting a separator system that is most compatible with an existing vacuum system, meets the facility workload flow rate and can be recycled in accordance with local and federal regulations should be done by following the guidance in the February 01, 2011 Office of the Air Force Dental Operations Director's Memorandum For Distribution update to the USAF Best Management Practices for Amalgam Waste attachments 4 and 5. An updated synopsis of ISO 11143 compliant amalgam separators is available on DECS' website using the following link: <http://www.afms.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-140418-008.pdf>

What is USAF's policy on dental Amalgam Separators?

Question: What is the USAF's policy on dental Amalgam Separators?

Answer: In 2010, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced its intention to propose a rule by 2012, that would make it mandatory to reduce mercury waste from dental facilities. On February 01, 2011 the Office of the Air Force Dental Operations Director released a [Memorandum](#) For Distribution with an update to the USAF Best Management Practices for Amalgam Waste. The 2011 update states, that "in addition to complying with the information included in the USAF Best Management Practices for Amalgam Waste- FY06, USAF dental facilities are highly encouraged to begin researching and initiating procurement of amalgam separator technology to further reduce amalgam waste discharge from their dental facility." No official date has been determined by the EPA making the use of amalgam separators mandatory for dental facilities in the U.S. However, some states and cities have already implemented local policies that require certain dental facilities to use amalgam separators. A Listing of States that require dental amalgam separators can be found [here](#). Meanwhile, USAF dental facilities will continue to voluntarily install and properly maintain amalgam separators, and recycle the collected amalgam waste as part of the best management practices. Always consult with your base Environmental Office for compliance with local policies and recycling procedures.