

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Dental Operations

How does an amalgam separator make a difference to my wastewater?

Amalgam contains various elemental metals which are toxic, causing short and long term impacts to the receiving environment and the wastewater treatment process at the JAMES Treatment Plant. The amalgam separator works by filtering small particles and allowing larger particles to be removed by gravity. As a result the amount of contaminants entering the sanitary sewer system from the dental office are reduced or eliminated.

Is every trace of contaminant removed from my wastewater when I use an amalgam separator?

The majority of contaminants are removed to concentrations below the Sewer Rates and Regulations Bylaw limits but the separator must be regularly maintained to achieve this.

How should I dispose of the amalgam that is collected in my amalgam separator?

Contact the service provider who originally installed the equipment. The service provider should be contacted regularly to inspect and maintain the separator and should offer services for properly disposing of the waste amalgam and filters.

How should I dispose of silver?

The silver waste from non-digital x-ray machines should be disposed of as hazardous waste. However some waste disposal companies can recycle the silver by extracting it from the waste as a precious metal. Contact the service provider who originally installed the equipment and they should have information regarding waste handling options.

Are there any exemptions for the Code of Practice for Dental Operations?

Yes. Dental offices where dental amalgam is neither placed nor removed, such as orthodontic, oral medicine, periodontic and oral surgery practices will be exempt from the requirement to install amalgam separators. Dental offices that remove amalgam on a rare occasion should speak with a product representative that can size the correct amalgam separator to meet the limited needs.

What is meant by a certified amalgam separator?

A certified amalgam separator means that the equipment is certified in accordance with ISO Standard ISO/FDIS 11143: (1999) for "Dental Equipment – Amalgam Separators" established by the International Organization of Standardization or any alternative deemed equivalent or better by the Engineer.



Is there a preferred supplier for amalgam separators?

Given the array of models available and the demand, this is a personal decision and the marketplace and individual negotiations will determine best prices. For a list of amalgam separator manufacturers, go to the BC Dental Association's members only section at www.bcdental.org.

What maintenance and record keeping is required for amalgam separators?

Dental offices are expected to operate and maintain amalgam separators according to the manufacturer's or supplier's instructions. Maintenance records must be kept for a minimum of two years and must be available for inspection by City staff upon request, at any time during the ordinary business hours of the dental operation. Refer to the Code of Practice for Dental Operations for more information about maintenance and record keeping.

Will amalgam separators be inspected?

Yes. City staff, upon request, may inspect amalgam separator equipment at any time during regular dental office hours.

Who do I contact if I have any further questions?

Joe Vurzinger, CTech
Utilities Environment Manager
Tel: 604-864-5663
Email: jvurzinger@abbotsford.ca