

State DEQ fines Willamette University for repeated hazardous waste violations

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The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality has fined Willamette University \$5,100 for four hazardous waste management violations found during an inspection of its maintenance yard.

DEQ cited, but didn't fine, the Salem school for an additional five violations.

"Despite having (issued) three warning letters in the past 10 years for hazardous waste violations, DEQ found numerous and repeated violations again this year," the regulators wrote in their [penalty letter](#). "Improper storage and management of hazardous waste threatens human health and the environment."

Willamette University spokesman Adam Torgerson said some of the violations dated back years and all have been corrected.

"We've had no spills or anything that has had environmental effects in any way," Torgerson said. "We have rigorous procedures to make sure our chemicals area handled safely. This was an oversight and we corrected it."

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Part of the Willamette University campus as seen from the top of the Oregon State Capitol in Salem. (Photo: ANNA REED / Statesman Journal)

During an April 2018 inspection of the facility, at 900 State Street, DEQ found:

- An open 5-gallon container of ignitable solvent that was not labeled with the date the school began accumulating the waste, as required.
- Five 5-gallon improperly labeled containers with a mixture of alkaline and lithium batteries destined for recycling.
- A 55-gallon drum of mercury-containing fluorescent light bulbs stored for nearly a year longer than allowed.
- A 5-gallon container of used oil and a 55-gallon drum with an oil and water mixture, not labeled as "used oil," as required.
- No contingency plan posted near the hazardous waste storage area, as required, that would show the location of fire extinguishers, fire alarms and spill control materials.

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Willamette was cited for failing to determine whether residues were hazardous waste; failing to store hazardous waste in a closed container; failing to accurately label containers of hazardous waste; failing to ship mercury-containing waste lamps offsite within one year; failing to submit accurate hazardous waste reports and fees on time; and failing to post the location of spill response equipment in the hazardous waste storage area.