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NIH Programs for Surplus Chemical Redistribution and Solvent Recovery

As one of the premier biomedical research institutions, the NIH houses approximately 4,000 laboratories across its various campuses. To support the NIH mission, these labs must purchase and dispose of a large quantity of chemicals. It is advantageous from both a cost and environmental perspective for the NIH to identify methods for recycling used solvents or using sealed and unexpired surplus chemicals. The NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program and the NIH Solvent Recovery Program were created to reduce the cost of purchasing new chemicals and to lessen the volume of chemical waste for NIH labs. These programs have effectively reduced the volume of chemical waste and saved the NIH researcher money since 2013.

The NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program is based on the concept of using and purchasing chemicals as efficiently as possible. Through this program, NIH staff can post surplus chemicals on the [NIH FreeStuff website](#) (initially started by NIAID) to be claimed for free by other staff members. The chemicals must be sealed, unused and unexpired.

Labs routinely find themselves in the possession of unused chemicals that are not needed, whether from reducing inventory for a move, discontinuing research projects, or a variety of other situations. These items can now be claimed and used by other researchers instead of being discarded into the chemical waste stream. By eliminating the need for additional purchases, the NIH saves money on procurement and chemical waste disposal. In 2017, the NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program processed 4700 pounds of chemicals, saving the NIH approximately \$6,000 in disposal costs and \$171,000 in procurement costs.

The NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program processes requests from all 27 Institutes and Centers and will deliver to all campuses in the D.C./Baltimore metropolitan area. If you are interested in posting a surplus reagent or browsing the list of available chemicals, please visit the [NIH FreeStuff website](#). Click on the "Chemicals & Reagents" button to view the current inventory or click on the "Post" button next to it to post your own chemical surplus items.

The NIH Solvent Recovery Program provides free purified solvents to NIH labs that have been recycled from used solvents. Through this program, an NIH lab can have ethanol, formalin, acetone and xylene distilled from their used solvents and returned in a purified form. These solvents are purified using a distillation process followed by quality assurance and quality control testing methods. The returned solvents are of high purity; labs have reported no differences between these recovered solvents and commercial products. In 2017, the NIH Solvent Recovery Program saved the NIH approximately \$4,700 in disposal costs and \$117,000 in procurement costs. Please contact [Mr. Crispin Hernandez](#) or call 301-496-7990 to inquire about participating in the NIH Solvent Recovery Program.

The NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution and Solvent Recovery programs help the NIH meet its waste minimization goals. Through recycling and reuse, these programs make the purchasing and use of chemicals at NIH more efficient. If you have any questions regarding either of these programs, please contact [Mr. Crispin Hernandez](#). If you are interested in other recycling opportunities, read our "Take Action" article to learn about the upcoming activities at the NIH for America Recycles Day.

TAKE ACTION



Join the NIH for America Recycles Day

The NIH annually celebrates America Recycles Day during the days surrounding November 15. Read inside to learn about the activities across the NIH campuses and about how you can participate!

[LEARN MORE](#)

STAFF SPOTLIGHT



NIH Staff Support of the Surplus Chemical Redistribution and Solvent Recovery Programs

The many recycling programs at the NIH are very dependent on strong participation from its staff. Read inside to hear what other researchers have to say about their experience with the NIH Surplus Chemical Redistribution Program or the NIH Solvent Recovery Program.

[LEARN MORE](#)

NEMS TRAINING

Did you know? The NIH Surplus Chemical Distribution and NIH Solvent Recovery programs diverted a total of 12,750 pounds of chemical waste from waste streams in 2017. To learn more about chemical recycling at the NIH, please visit the [NEMS Training webpage](#) to view a short (20 minute) NIH environmental awareness training video.