

Household Hazardous Waste Fact Sheet

What is household hazardous waste?

Many hazardous products and chemicals such as cleaners, oils and pesticides are used in the home every day. When discarded, these products are called household hazardous waste (HHW). HHWs are discarded materials and products that are ignitable, corrosive, reactive, toxic or otherwise listed as hazardous by the EPA. Products used and disposed of by a typical residence may contain more than 100 hazardous substances including:

- Batteries
- Cleaners
- Cosmetics
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Glues
- Heating oil
- Insecticides and pesticides
- Ink
- Medicines
- Motor oil and automotive supplies
- Paints, thinners, stains and varnishes
- Polishes
- Swimming pool chemicals
- Smoke detectors
- Fuel

HHW is a serious threat

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average American household generates 20 pounds of HHW each year. As much as 100 pounds of HHW can accumulate in the home and remain there until the resident moves or undertakes a thorough "spring cleaning."

Since the chemicals found in HHW can cause soil and groundwater contamination, generate hazardous emissions at landfills and disrupt water treatment plants, it is important to dispose of HHW properly. Many solid waste treatment facilities are currently required to screen for HHW to avoid operating under restrictive hazardous waste laws. Furthermore, many communities may be required to establish an HHW collection program in order to qualify for permits to manage storm water.

Safe handling tips

The best way to handle HHW materials is to completely use the product before disposing of the container. If this is not possible, then the next alternative is to return unused portions to your community HHW clean-up day. Keep products in their original package with all labels intact. If the container is leaking, place it in a thick plastic bag. Pack the products in a plastic-lined cardboard box to prevent leaks and breakage.

HHW clean-up days are for household wastes only. No industrial or commercial wastes and no containers larger than

five gallons are accepted. Explosives, radioactive material and medical wastes are also unacceptable.

HHW can be dangerous to people and pets who come in contact with them. HHW can endanger water supplies, damage sewage treatment systems, and cause other environmental damage. Only use the products as directed. DO NOT:

- Flush HHWs down the toilet
- Pour HHWs down the sink
- Pour HHWs down a storm drain
- Pour HHWs on the ground

Contact your local health department or the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste to determine whether your community has a HHW collection program.

Identify HHW

Reduce the amount of potentially hazardous products in your home and eliminate what you throw away by following these easy steps:

1. Before you buy:
 - a. Read the labels and be aware of what they mean.
 - b. Look for these words on labels; they tell you what products may need special handling or disposal:
 - i. Caution
 - ii. Combustible
 - iii. Corrosive
 - iv. Danger
 - v. Explosive
 - vi. Flammable
 - vii. Poison
 - viii. Toxic
 - ix. Volatile
 - x. Warning
 - c. Select a product best suited for the job.
 - d. Buy only what you can use entirely.
2. After you buy:
 - a. Read label precautions and follow directions for safe use.
 - b. Recycle/dispose of empty containers properly.
 - c. Share what you can't use with friends or neighbors.
 - d. Store properly.
 - e. Use recommended amounts; more is not necessarily better.
 - f. Use the child-resistant closures and keep them on tightly.

For more information, contact:

Division of Drinking Water	(801) 536-4200
Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste	(801) 538-6170
Division of Water Quality	(801) 538-6146
Sonja Wallace, Pollution Prevention Coord.	(801) 536-4477
Environmental Hotline	1-800-458-0145