

# HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE WHAT YOU SHOULD & SHOULDN'T DO



# Are You Poisoning Your Water?

If someone were to drop a poisonous substance into your community's water supply, the act would be considered a serious crime and a state of public emergency would be declared.

But when you dump a can of paint thinner down the drain or throw out an old car battery with the trash, no alarms are sounded, no news flashes are issued. Yet, the impact on your water resources could be just as disastrous.

That is not a far-fetched statement. The average household contains between three and ten gallons or ten to forty liters of materials that are hazardous to human health or to the natural environment. Collectively, these materials can poison our water if they are not stored carefully and disposed of properly.

## What Is A Hazardous Material?

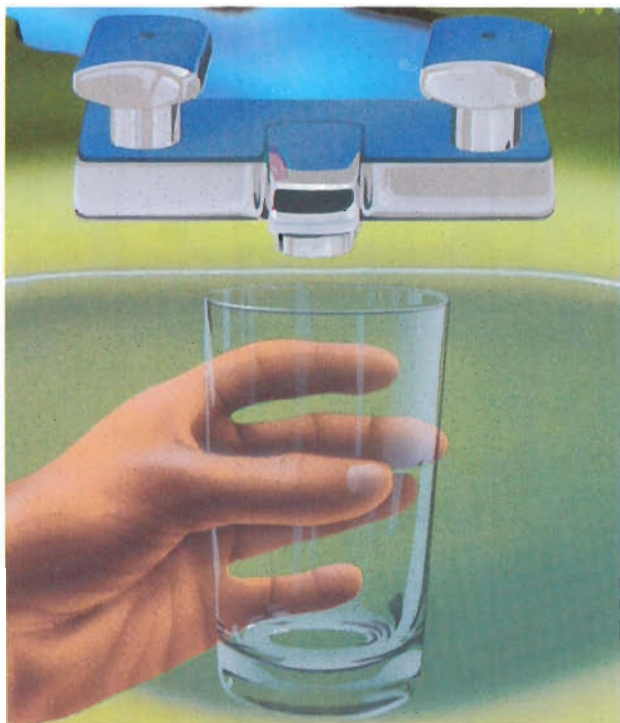
Many government environmental agencies consider a substance hazardous if it can catch fire, if it can react or explode when mixed with other substances, if it is corrosive, or if it is toxic.

This definition includes many things that you probably are storing right now in your garage, basement, bathroom, or kitchen. Some, like paint thinner or car batteries, are pretty obvious, but there are many that you might not ordinarily think of such as polishes, insecticides and glues.

## Dangers Of Hazardous Waste

The improper disposal of household wastes can cause problems for the entire community. Wastes can be explosive or highly flammable. Sewers have exploded and garbage trucks have burned because people have carelessly discarded flammable or reactive wastes.

Hazardous wastes can also be corrosive. The acid from discarded auto batteries can eat away many substances. Some wastes are poisonous to humans or wildlife, while others can cause cancer, birth defects or other serious medical problems.



## Where Do We Put Them?

One of the worst ways to dispose of many hazardous materials is to "just dump them down the drain." Wastewater treatment plants are not designed to handle certain types of hazardous wastes.

Unfortunately, disposing of wastes in a landfill has not proven an effective solution either. Without special design, the modern sanitary landfill is not equipped to accept hazardous wastes. Hazardous wastes improperly disposed of in a landfill can pollute the environment through the groundwater, surface water and air.

If the public cannot dispose of most hazardous wastes in the sewer system or a landfill, what can be done? This brochure describes some preventive measures you can take in your home to reduce the quantity of waste you must dispose. The **Household Hazardous Waste Chart** indicates the best way of dealing with most hazardous materials found in the home.

## First: Reduce The Amount

You do not need a Ph.D. in chemistry to reduce the use of hazardous wastes in your home. The following suggestions can help:

- Before you buy a product, read the label and make sure that it will do what you want. Once you buy something you are responsible for disposing of it properly.
- Do not buy more than you need. That way, you will not need to dispose of the surplus.
- Read and follow directions on how to use a product and dispose of the container. (There is a good reason why the labels say "do not incinerate" or "do not mix with bleach.")
- Use safer substitutes when they are available.

## Second: Take Care Of The Wastes

Even if you reduce the wastes that must be dealt with as outlined above, there is still the question of what to do with what is left over.

Recycling is an excellent way of handling some hazardous wastes. Used motor oil, paint thinners and some other solvents can be refined and reused just as aluminum cans are. Local civic groups can help you identify recycling programs.

Municipal or commercial incineration is another effective means of dealing with some hazardous wastes. However, a specially designed incinerator is needed to destroy hazardous materials. "Incinerators" in your home, such as your fireplace or woodstove, can not get hot enough to destroy hazardous wastes and should **never** be used to destroy wastes.

Take your household hazardous wastes to a licensed contractor or recycling agency which may be located through the yellow pages. If such a group does not exist, your local wastewater treatment operator may be able to give you more information on the disposal of liquid waste. Your local sanitation department may be able to give you more information on the disposal of solid wastes.

The **Household Hazardous Waste Chart** will guide you in disposing of potentially hazardous material around your home. You should display this chart in a convenient location.

Remember to never dump hazardous wastes on the ground, and always check the chart before pouring them down the drain.

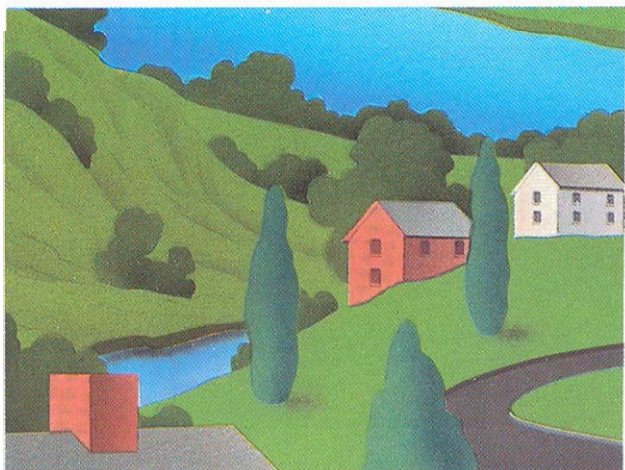
## What You Can Do In Your Community

By working together, the people in a community can plan and create effective systems for managing hazardous wastes. Many communities have begun to sponsor Household Hazardous Waste collection days. These efforts have helped reduce the amount of hazardous waste in many areas while heightening public awareness of the problem.

Successful collection efforts in many cities have helped officials protect their community's wastewater treatment plants and groundwater from hazardous waste contamination. Many communities were able to collect large quantities of hazardous materials on the strength of a one or two day effort. If your community has a program for disposal of hazardous wastes, please support it.

We also encourage you to:

- Learn as much as you can about your wastewater treatment plant and share that information with your family and friends. Clean water is for everyone.
- Learn about your community's landfill system and special programs for the disposal of hazardous wastes.
- Contact your area's hazardous waste agency. They can provide information on companies which are licensed to handle hazardous wastes along with possible funding sources for such efforts.



# HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE CHART

The following chart prepared by the Water Environment Federation will help you establish the most effective means of disposing of typical hazardous wastes used around your home or garden.

Blue dots ( ● ) indicate products which can be poured down the drain with plenty of water. If you have a septic tank, additional caution should be exercised when dumping these items down the drain. In fact, there are certain chemical substances that cannot be used with a septic tank. Read the labels to determine if a product could damage the septic tank.

Yellow diamonds ( ◆ ) indicate materials which cannot be poured down the drain, but can be safely disposed of in a sanitary landfill. Be certain the material is properly contained before it is put out for collection or carried to the landfill.


The red boxed squares ( ◻ ) indicate hazardous wastes which


should be saved for a community wide collection day or given to a licensed hazardous wastes contractor. (Even the empty containers should be taken to a licensed contractor if one is available.)


Green packages ( ◆ ) in the fourth column indicate recyclable material. If there is a recycling program in your area, take the materials there. If not, encourage local officials to start such a program.

For more information on the safest way to dispose of these and other products contact your area's solid and hazardous waste department or federal environmental agency. We suggest that you note here these important phone numbers in your local area:

**Hazardous Waste Management Agency** ☎ \_\_\_\_\_  
**Poison Control Center** ☎ \_\_\_\_\_

		TYPE OF WASTE				
		●	◆	◻	◆	
 <p><b>KITCHEN</b></p>	Aerosol cans (empty)		◆			◆
	Aluminum cleaners	●				
	Ammonia based cleaners	●				
	Bug sprays					◻
	Drain cleaners	●				
	Floor care products					◻
	Furniture polish					◻
	Metal polish with solvent					◻
	Window cleaner	●				
	Oven cleaner (lye base)		◆			

 <p><b>BATHROOM</b></p>	Alcohol based lotions (aftershaves, perfumes, etc.)	●				
	Bathroom cleaners	●				
	Depilatories	●				
	Disinfectants	●				
	Permanent Lotions	●				
	Hair relaxers	●				
	Medicine (expired)	●				
	Nail polish (solidified)		◆			
	Toilet bowl cleaner	●				
Tub and tile cleaners	●					

 <p><b>GARAGE</b></p>	Antifreeze			◻		◆
	Automatic transmission fluid			◻		◆
	Auto body repair products		◆			
	Battery acid (or battery)			◻		◆
	Brake fluid			◻		
	Car wax with solvent			◻		
	Diesel fuel			◻		◆
	Fuel oil			◻		◆
	Gasoline			◻		◆
	Kerosene			◻		◆
Metal polish with solvent			◻			

Motor oil			
Other oils			☐
Windshield washer solution	●		



## WORKSHOP

Paint brush cleaner with solvent			☐	◆
Paint brush cleaner with TSP	●			
Aerosol cans (empty)		◆		◆
Cutting oil			☐	
Glue (solvent based)			☐	
Glue (water based)	●			
Paint — latex		◆		◆
Paint — oil based			☐	
Paint — auto			☐	
Paint — model			☐	
Paint thinner			☐	◆
Paint stripper			☐	
Paint stripper (lye base)	●			
Primer			☐	
Rust remover (with phosphoric acid)	●			
Turpentine			☐	◆
Varnish			☐	
Wood preservative			☐	



## GARDEN

Fertilizer		◆		
Fungicide			☐	
Herbicide			☐	
Insecticide			☐	
Rat poison			☐	
Weed killer			☐	



## MISCELLANEOUS

Ammunition			☐	
Artists' paints, mediums			☐	
Dry cleaning solvents			☐	◆
Fiberglass epoxy			☐	
Gun cleaning solvents			☐	◆
Lighter fluid			☐	
Mercury batteries			☐	◆
Moth balls			☐	
Old fire alarms			☐	
Photographic chemicals			☐	
Shoe polish		◆		
Swimming pool acid			☐	

The preceding chart is based on information from the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Hazardous Waste regulations. The Water Environment Federation assumes no responsibility and disclaims any liability for any injury or damage resulting from the use or effect of any product or information specified in this publication. The information contained in this pamphlet is intended as a general guideline. Laws and regulations may vary from state to state. Additionally, product formulation can change over time. Be sure to check manufacturer's label for specific disposal guidelines. Above all use common sense!

## What The Future Holds

Billions of dollars have been spent to clean up our lakes and streams. Many millions more have been spent to build and maintain adequate sanitary landfills.

Modern wastewater treatment plants have led us all to expect clean water and a safe environment as a part of our everyday lives. We now realize that we cannot just discharge our wastes into a stream or bury hazardous wastes without thinking about the impact on the environment.

For that reason and others, household hazardous waste collection has really caught on. Communities throughout the world have begun to develop programs to deal with household wastes. These efforts need to be expanded to include as many areas as possible.

For details on what you can do, contact your local wastewater treatment facility, Department of Public Works or Sanitation District. Or, for further information you can contact:



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