

Toxics in Your Home

Disposal

In most areas of the country, methods for safe disposal of consumer products containing toxic chemicals are not easily available. When hazardous substances are poured down household drains, they may pass through the sewage treatment process unaltered and eventually reach surface water or groundwater. They can kill bacteria needed to keep septic systems functioning properly. If hazardous substances are poured on the street, they can cause water contamination because street drains usually connect directly to a lake or stream. When poured onto the ground, buried, or improperly placed into a landfill, the toxins can seep into the soil and contaminate groundwater supplies.

Small Quantities Can Do Great Harm

Many people assume that the consequences of household hazardous waste are minor compared to the amount of industrial pollution generated daily. However, even very small amounts of toxic substances can result in large problems. For example, just a quart of motor oil can contaminate millions of gallons of water. Because of their widespread use, household hazardous materials are potentially a very serious problem to both health and environment.

Household hazardous wastes are exempt from state and federal waste disposal regulations.

What You Can Do

It is easy to get into the habit of using numerous toxic chemical products in the home, especially when they are promoted so heavily through advertising. We begin to think they are all necessary.

As consumers, we need to educate ourselves about potentially hazardous products, learn of substitutes which are less toxic, and utilize the best disposal methods when toxic chemicals must be used.

In the center of this brochure is a chart which lists the most common hazardous household products, explains some of the threats they pose, suggests the best disposal method, and offers alternatives when available. We suggest you post this chart in a convenient place so you can refer to it often.

Why Use Alternatives?

Many of the alternatives listed on the chart are more common and much less expensive than their toxic counterparts. Every time you purchase a product, first find out if there is a less toxic alternative. In many cases, your grandparents' alternative will work just as well.

By choosing to use a nonhazardous substance instead of a product containing toxic chemicals, you are helping to keep our air clean, our water pure, and your household safe.

Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Consider using safer alternatives.
- Reduce your waste and save money by purchasing only materials you need and will use.
- Use up the product, if possible, or give it to a friend to use.
- Read label directions carefully and be sure the product is appropriate for the intended use.
- Dispose of hazardous materials using a licensed hazardous waste contractor or during a community hazardous waste collection day, if possible.
- Encourage your community to sponsor a household hazardous waste collection day.
- Contact the proper authorities (listed below) if you need more information about a product or substance.
 - Local County Health Departments or Cooperative Extension Agents.
 - State of Michigan Toxic Substances and Health Hotline: 1-800-648-6942
 - National Pesticide Telecommunications Network: 1-800-858-7378
 - Anti-Microbial Hotline (disinfectants, bleaches, cleaners, etc.): 1-800-447-6349
 - Poison Center-Blodgett Regional: 1-800-632-2727

Do not:

- Bury leftover toxic products or their containers in your yard or in soil.
- Dispose of liquid toxics without first solidifying them with cat box filler, sawdust, or a commercial oil absorbent.
- Burn leftover containers or products.
- Mix different products together; dangerous chemical reactions may result.
- Dispose of any excess material or waste by pouring it down the drain, unless this is a recommended disposal method.
- Give leftover products to others if they are not in their original containers or if they are a banned substance.

Bellaire
231-533-8670

Petoskey
231-347-6014

Charlevoix
231-547-6523

Gaylord
989-732-1794

Toxics in your Home



Toxic Chemicals Are Everywhere

The average American household has many products containing toxic chemicals. Many automotive supplies, household cleaners, paints, solvents, and pesticides create air and water pollution during the manufacturing process. They present health dangers to their users and pose long-term threats to the environment when disposed of improperly.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTES - REFERENCE CHART

	Substance	Alternatives	Problem	Proper Disposal Method
Household & Personal Products	Caustics	<p>Oven Cleaners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use baking soda for scouring. For baked-on grease, put 1/4 cup ammonia in oven overnight to loosen, then scrub with baking soda. Avoid the use of aerosols! Pastes are safer. <p>Drain Cleaners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pour boiling water down drain. Use plunger or metal "snake." <p>Toilet Bowl Cleaners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use baking soda or dishwashing liquid or a paste of borax and lemon juice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •All these caustic chemicals are highly corrosive and can cause severe skin and eye damage. Many are immediately poisonous to people, fish, and wildlife in undiluted concentrations. Usually fatal if swallowed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use up if possible, or take to a household hazardous waste collection center. Otherwise, SOLIDIFY liquids by mixing them with cat box filler, sawdust, or soil until completely absorbed. Then, as with dry caustics, WRAP SECURELY in a plastic bag and dispose of in a licensed landfill with other household refuse. •For some products, absorbed liquids can be allowed to EVAPORATE in a well ventilated area until there is no detectable odor. •Most kitchen and bathroom cleaners may be safely disposed of down the drain.
	Solvents	<p>Furniture Polish</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lemon oil polish: Mix 1 tsp. lemon oil in 1 pt. mineral oil. Or: Melt 1 tbsp. carnauba wax into 2 cups mineral oil. <p>Silver Cleaner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Soak silver in 1 qt. warm water with 1 tsp. baking soda, 1 tsp. salt, and a small piece of aluminum foil. <p>Paint Remover</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use sandpaper, scrapers, or a heat gun. <p>Paint Thinners/Degreasers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use sparingly with good ventilation. Keep lids on tightly. <p>Oil-Based Paints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use latex (water-based) paints if possible. <p>Latex (Water-Based) Paints</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use latex paints without hazardous ingredients. (See list under <i>Problem</i>.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Breathing vapors or accidentally drinking all these solvents can be harmful, even fatal. Long-term over-exposure may cause liver and kidney problems, birth defects, central nervous system disorders, or cancer. •Most of these solvents are toxic and can contaminate surface and ground waters. •Methylene chloride, found in many paint removers, is very toxic, especially to people with heart conditions. •Most contain toxic substances which can contaminate surfaces and ground waters. •Latex paints may contain ethylene glycol, glycol ethers, lead, phenyl mercuric acetate, pigments and resins which are toxic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use up if possible. SOLIDIFY, EVAPORATE, and WRAP as described above. •Reuse paint thinner if possible. To do so, let used paint thinner sit in a closed container until particles settle out. Then strain and reuse. •Oil-based paints should be used up or taken to a household hazardous waste collection center. •Unwanted latex paint should be solidified by removing the lid and allowing the liquids to EVAPORATE in a well ventilated area, or solidify as above. Leave lids off and dispose with household refuse.
	Aerosol Sprays	<p>Deodorants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use roll-ons, cream sticks, pump sprays. <p>Hair Spray</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use pump sprays, setting lotion, or gels. <p>Shaving Cream</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use brush and shaving soaps. <p>Insect Repellent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use pump-style or rub-on type. <p>Glass Cleaners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use 2 tsp. vinegar and 1 qt. water or pump-style cleaner. <p>Air Fresheners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ventilate! Or set vinegar out in an open dish. Use a box of baking soda in enclosed areas such as closets or refrigerators. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Many aerosols are a major source of pollution in the home. Mist particles from the aerosol, often containing petroleum distillates, toluene, chlorinated hydrocarbons, and ketones, may enter the lungs and then the bloodstream. There is also danger of exploding aerosol cans, if they are crushed or burned. •Propellants in many aerosol products can deplete the ozone layer around the earth, which filters ultraviolet radiation. •Air fresheners mask one odor with another, coating the nasal passages with an oil film or diminishing the sense of smell with a nerve-deadening agent. Also, many air fresheners contain benzene rings which are carcinogenic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use up if possible or give to someone else in the original container. WRAP empty container securely and dispose of in a licensed landfill with other household refuse. •Take full aerosol containers to a household hazardous waste collection center.
Pesticides/ Herbicides	Pesticides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Use non-toxic pest control. Remove and destroy infected plants. Identify and attack specific pests with barriers, traps, etc. Introduce beneficial organisms. Use non-toxic pesticides, such as fly paper, for household pests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pesticides and herbicides can cause serious harm to people, pets, and wildlife. They may also destroy beneficial insect populations, promote development of pest resistance, and pollute the environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Leftover products may be given to others ONLY if not a banned substance and in the original container with accompanying precautionary statements. Some banned substances include DDT, dioxin, and chlordane.
	Herbicides	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pull weeds and mulch generously. Cover with plastic in fall. Discourage unwanted lawn plants by applying target seeds annually. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Take leftover materials to a household hazardous waste collection center.
Automotive Products	Motor Oil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Motor oil, transmission and brake fluids are all toxic. Used motor oil contains lead and other metals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Motor oil should be recycled at a service station or other used oil collection center.
	Antifreeze	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Antifreeze is sweet-tasting but highly poisonous. Don't leave puddles or bottles where pets, children, or animals can find them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Antifreeze can be recycled. If your community does not provide for antifreeze recycling, the next best solution (in areas served by a wastewater treatment plant) is to dispose of it down the drain. Small amounts (up to 1 gal. per week) may be put in the septic tank where bacteria will digest the antifreeze.
	Car/Boat Batteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No alternatives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Batteries contain sulfuric acid (which can produce serious burns) and lead. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Batteries should be recycled. Check telephone book for stations which take old batteries for trade-ins or recycling.



* When toxic materials evaporate, the toxins may be transferred to the air and eventually return to the land in the form of contaminated rain, snow, or fallout. For this reason, evaporation is the least recommended disposal option. It is better to use the material up or take it to a household hazardous waste collection.