

# Disposal of Household Hazardous Materials

Many of the products we use around our homes contain hazardous components. Such products may include paints, stains, varnishes, cleaners, batteries, motor oil and pesticides. The left over contents of such products are known as "household hazardous waste."

Individually, the waste may seem insignificant, but in aggregate, it can be extensive. Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste per year. The average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of household hazardous waste in the basement and garage and in storage closets. When improperly disposed of, household hazardous waste can create a potential risk to people and the environment.

Household hazardous wastes are sometimes disposed of improperly by individuals who pour wastes down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers, or put them out with the trash. The dangers associated with such activity may not appear obvious but certain hazardous waste materials have the potential to cause physical injury to sanitation workers; contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets; and present hazards to children and pets if left around the house.

One way to reduce the potential concerns associated with household hazardous waste is to reduce the amount and/or toxicity of the products you choose. Purchase only the amount needed, share any left over product with neighbors and remember anything that is not used should be given to a household hazardous waste collection program.

Because of the potential risks associated with household hazardous wastes, it is important that people always use, store, and dispose of materials containing hazardous substances safely:

- Never store hazardous substances in food containers. Keep hazardous substances in the original containers and do not remove the labels.
- Follow instructions on the label for proper disposal.
- Take household hazardous waste to a local collection program, if available.
- Check with your local chamber of commerce, county, or state environmental or solid waste agency to see if there is a household hazardous waste collection program in your area.

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