

FACT SHEET

What is Household Hazardous Waste?

Hazardous waste is any discarded material that poses a threat to public health, safety, and the environment due to its chemical composition. Discarding such materials into the trash, a septic system, or a sewer system puts our groundwater and our lakes, rivers and streams at risk.

Almost every modern product contains some kind of toxic chemical. These chemicals can be found in items ranging from laptop computers to children toys. Many of these poisons, including heavy metals, noxious gases, and carcinogens, are released into the environment, either as products put to their intended use or as waste.

BUT . . . we barely understand the long-term damage that these chemicals are doing to our health and to our environment. Virtually every person on the planet has some synthetic poisons present in their bodies. Many health problems, such as cancer and birth defects, can be linked to exposure to toxic chemicals and our consumption of them.

How does hazardous waste affect our water quality?

Groundwater (underground reservoirs) is polluted by:

- improperly managed septic systems,
- disposal of chemicals and medications into septic systems and sewers, and
- direct disposal of hazardous waste into the ground.

Surface water (rivers, lakes, wetlands) is polluted by:

- wastewater, and
- surface drain disposal.

Stormwater is polluted by:

- accidental & improper land disposal of wastes
- applications of chemicals to the land (i.e. pesticides, fertilizers, Coal Tar Asphalt Sealcoats, etc.)

Once groundwater has been polluted by hazardous chemicals, it is very difficult and expensive to clean it up.

For Additional Information:

What are Household Hazardous Wastes?

<http://www.epa.gov/osw/conserve/materials/hhw.htm>

Recycling Guide for McHenry County:

<http://www.mcdef.org/recy.pdf>

Solid Waste Management:

<http://www.co.mchenry.il.us/common/countydpt/PlanDev/swLinks.asp>

Medicinal disposal in McHenry County:

For participating providers, call your local police department or pharmacy.

**also see Medication Disposal brochure at www.mchenry2o.com*

Illinois Environmental Protection Agency

<http://www.epa.state.il.us/land/hazardous-waste/household-haz-waste/>



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Household Hazardous Waste





WHERE...

"TOP 10" KILLER HOUSEHOLD CHEMICALS

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

... is hazardous waste found?

There are many types of hazardous materials found in the average home today, including:

- Cleaning products
- Paints
- Solvents
- Lawn/Garden Care Products
- Automobile Fluids
- Pool Chemicals
- Medications
- Batteries
- Computers, Monitors, and TVs



Some household hazardous wastes may be identified if one or more of these words appears on the label:

- **Flammable or combustible** - can be set on fire easily.
- **Explosive or reactive** - can detonate or explode through exposure to heat, sudden shock or pressure.
- **Corrosive** - can destroy or cause burns to the skin or other living tissues.
- **Toxic or poison** - capable of causing injury or death through ingestion, inhalation, absorption, or injection.

NEVER PUT THEM DOWN THE DRAIN!

Would you drink paint?

Paints, paint thinners, rust removers, preservatives, and furniture strippers can contaminate groundwater and are toxic to aquatic life. These products should never be put down the drain into sewer or septic systems!



Air Fresheners: May contain formaldehyde and phenol.



Ammonia: Damages eyes, respiratory tract and skin.



Bleach: A strong corrosive that irritates the skin, eyes, and respiratory tract.



Carpet and upholstery shampoos: These contain perchloroethylene, which damages the liver, the kidneys, and the nervous system. They also may contain ammonium hydroxide, which is corrosive and extremely irritable to eyes, skin and respiratory passages.



Dishwasher Detergents: These may contain highly concentrated chlorine, the **#1 cause of child poisonings**.



Drain Cleaners: These contain lye, hydrochloric acid, and trichloroethane, all of which are eye and skin irritants that can damage your liver and your kidneys.



Furniture Polish: Petroleum distillates can cause skin and lung cancer and are highly flammable. Phenol and nitrobenzene are also highly toxic.



Mold & Mildew Cleaners: These may contain formaldehyde, a carcinogen and sensitizer, as well as phenol, kerosene, pentachlorophenol, chlorine and fungicides. Often sold as aerosol sprays, these create fine mists which can be deeply inhaled or contact eyes.



Oven Cleaners: These create toxic fumes that can burn eyes, skin and internal organs. Lye and ammonia are often the active cleaning agents in these products.



Toilet Bowl Cleaners: Contain pesticide chemicals like sodium hypochlorite or bleach, and other chemicals like hydrochloric acid. Can irritate or burn eyes or skin.

More toxic products include:

Dishwashing Liquid and Antibacterial Cleaners
Laundry Detergents and Fabric Softeners

DISPOSAL + RECYCLING

How can you dispose of household hazardous waste?

- 1) Reduce, re-use and recycle!
- 2) Dispose of unused and/or unwanted waste at a Household Hazardous Waste collection event.
- 3) Purchase "Green" or "Organic" alternatives.

Alternatives



Look for:

- Chlorine-free products
- Low or no volatile organic compounds or petroleum distillate products
- Water-based glues, adhesives, and paints
- Oven cleaners without lye
- Citrus or vegetable-based solvents and strippers
- Products with the green seal of approval (greenseal.org)
- The least-hazardous product label

Switch to:

- Digital thermostats and alcohol thermometers, instead of mercury ones
- Fluorescent lamps
- Alternative methods of pest control, inside and outside the house
- Rechargeable batteries

Avoid:

- Products with toxic ingredients or labels which describe possible hazards with terms such as flammable, combustible, corrosive, reactive/ explosive, toxic, or poison.