

# Guide to Household Hazardous Waste

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Safe Use, Storage, and Disposal Practices

Dangers of Improper Disposal

How to Reduce Household Hazardous Waste

What Are Alternative Products?

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## Safe Use, Storage, and Disposal Practices

Many of the products found in our homes are toxic. They can cause serious human and animal health and environmental problems if used, stored and disposed of improperly. The simple practices listed below can help keep your family, home, neighborhood and environment safe.

### Do's

- Think carefully before buying a product. Do you really need it? Do you already have something similar?
- Buy just enough to do the job.
- Look for a non-hazardous or less hazardous substitute.
- Read the label and follow use, storage and disposal directions carefully. Watch for signal words such as *caution, warning, poison or danger*. If directions are unclear, contact the manufacturer or dealer before using.
- Keep all chemical products and waste out of reach of children and animals.
- Keep leftover products in original labeled containers so that you can refer to directions for use and proper disposal.
- Share unused products with others if each product is in its original container with a label.
- Dispose of household waste properly by taking it to a collection event scheduled in your community or to a permanent collection facility.
- Locate auto repair shops, quick lube stations, gas stations that recycle used motor oil, antifreeze and batteries.
- Completely finish products in containers before disposal. Clean, empty containers can be put in the trash. (Note: Some Communities will even recycle steel paint cans and aerosol containers)
- Triple rinse all containers of water soluble materials. Use rinse water according to label directions.

### Don'ts

- Do not dump leftover products into the street, storm drains or ground. It is illegal.
- Do not burn used or leftover products or product containers. Burning may produce toxic fumes and contribute to air pollution.
- Do not bury leftover products or containers in your yard or garden.
- Do not reuse pesticide or other chemical containers for other purposes.
- Do not mix chemical products or wastes.
- Do not put any household hazardous waste in the trash or in the sink.

- Do not repackage chemical products in containers that are normally used for food products or soft drinks. Children have died from drinking chemicals stored in soft drink and juice bottles.
- Do not store corrosives, flammables and poisons together. Separate these containers.
- Never mix household hazardous materials. Dangerous reactions can occur.
- Do not smoke, eat or drink when handling household hazardous products.

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## **Dangers of Improper Disposal**

When used, stored and disposed of according to label directions, most household products like cleaners, beauty products, medicines, auto fluids, paint and lawn care products pose little hazard to people or to the environment. However, these products may become dangerous and hazardous when used, stored or carelessly.

When thrown in with regular trash, household hazardous waste can injure sanitation workers. In addition, the hazardous waste may end up in landfills not intended or permitted for those types of wastes which could in turn impact groundwater.

When poured on the ground, household hazardous waste may seep into and contaminate our groundwater or nearby surface water resources.

When flushed down a toilet or drain, household hazardous waste goes through the sewage system, or worse through your septic tank, to treatment plants not equipped to handle hazardous waste. At treatment plants, hazardous waste interferes with the biological treatment process by killing the good bacteria and contaminating the effluent that runs into our rivers and other surface waters and the biosolids which cannot then be reused as fertilizer.

When hazardous waste is thrown on the street, it goes down storm drains untreated to our area waterways, impacting surface water resources.

Improper use, storage and disposal of household hazardous products can potentially harm our families, children, and pets, pollute our neighborhoods and contaminate our ground, water and air.

### **Poisoning Prevention Tips:**

- Keep all hazardous products in their original containers and out-of-reach of children. Medicines should have child-resistant caps.
- Install child safety latches on all drawers or cabinets containing harmful products.
- Store harmful products away from food.
- Keep original labels on all containers, read and follow directions carefully.
- Keep syrup of ipecac on hand and have the Poison Control Center number on the telephone. 601-354-7660

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## How to Reduce Household Hazardous Waste

One way to reduce the generation of household hazardous waste and prevent potential pollution from the use of dangerous products is to find non-hazardous or less hazardous products. This will help protect the health of your family, neighbors and the environment.

### What You Can Do to Reduce Household Hazardous Waste

As you make your choices about the use of hazardous and non-hazardous products, remember that the decisions consumers make affect the way manufacturers design products.

- Use products containing hazardous materials and fertilizers sparingly or use a non-hazardous/less hazardous alternative.
- Before purchasing a product, read the label carefully to make sure it will do what you want it to do. Once you buy something you are also legally responsible for disposing of it properly.
- Buy just what you need to do the job. Use it up. Give leftovers to a friend, neighbor, business or charity that can use them up. Excess pesticide might be offered to a greenhouse or garden center.
- Select water-based products over solvent-based when available (e.g., paint, glue, shoe polish).
- Avoid aerosol sprays. Choose the pump spray or other alternatives.
- Be smart when you apply pesticides or fertilizers. Do not apply before a rain. Not only will you lose most of the pesticides or fertilizer through runoff, but you also will be harming the environment. Do not over water after application. Read the label. Do not apply more than is recommended.
- Have a professional change your motor oil. For a few dollars more, you not only save yourself time and energy, but it's more likely that the used motor oil collected is recycled.
- Dispose of household hazardous wastes according to the directions on the container, at a household hazardous waste collection event, or a permanent hazardous waste collection facility in your area. Contact the Recycling and Solid Waste Reduction Program at MDEQ for assistance in locating these sites.
- Ask for re-refined motor oil for your vehicle. Re-refined oil is oil that has been recycled and then reprocessed so it is as good or better than virgin oil. By using re-refined motor oil, you are closing the loop and saving natural resources.

## **Consumer Choices**

We can easily reduce the amount of toxicity of waste in and around our homes, and at the same time save money.

- Careful planning can help avoid the need for many potentially toxic products; and
- Carefully shopping will allow us to find products that can be recycled, reused or be disposed of safely.

Many sources of household hazardous waste can be replaced with other products that are safer, cheaper and equally effective.

Careful planning and shopping lend themselves to source reduction - meaning reducing the amount of hazardous materials entering the household as well as reducing the toxicity of the waste generated. We can do this by shopping thoughtfully, reading labels and looking for non-hazardous or less hazardous products.

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## What Are Alternative Products?

Try these easy alternatives to minimize household hazardous products. Most of these products are very common and are found in most household cabinets:

### Abrasive Cleaner for Counter Tops

Sprinkle baking soda or borax, add juice of 1/2 lemon and scrub

### All Purpose Cleaner

Mix 1/2 cup borax with 1 gallon water, or make a paste of baking soda and water, or make a dilute solution of vinegar and water (less water and more vinegar for tough stains).

### All Purpose Floor Polish

Mix 1/2 cup white vinegar and 1/2 cup Spenser pure raw linseed oil. Apply a thin coat and rub in well. Dries in 3 to 4 days. Apply more coats in high traffic areas.

### Appliance Cleaner

Mix together 1 teaspoon Borax, 2 tablespoons white vinegar, 1/4 teaspoon liquid soap and 2 cups hot water. Shake the solution well, spray on and wipe.

### Chlorine Bleach

Use dry bleaches sold in stores because they're less destructive or pour 1/2 to 1 cup of Borax into washer to whiten.

### Brass Cleaning and Polish

Mix equal parts of salt and flour. Add enough white vinegar to make a paste. cover the brass surface with the paste, allow to dry and then quickly wipe off.

### Cane Cleaning

Wipe the cane surface with white vinegar and water solution or salt and water solution. Allow to dry outdoors or in a well ventilated area.

### Ceramic Tile Cleaner

Mix together 1/4 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup vinegar, 1 cup ammonia and 1 quart warm water.

### Chrome and Stainless Steel Cleaner

Dip dry cloth into flour and rub on surface of object.

### Copper Cleaning Paste

Mix equal parts of salt and flour together. Heat an equal part of vinegar and add to the flour/salt mixture to form a paste. Rub on surface.

### Dishwashing Cleaner (hand or machine)

Mix together 1 part Borax and 1 part sodium carbonate. Add 1/2 to 1 cup of vinegar to brighten.

#### Disinfectant and Mildew/Stain Remover

Mix 1/2 cup of Borax with 1 gallon of hot water. Dissolve borax in hot water and wipe down areas to be disinfected or cleaned.

#### Drain Cleaner/Opener

1/4 cup vinegar and 1/4 cup of baking soda. Mix ingredients and pour mixture down drain. Let stand for a few minutes and rinse with boiling water.

#### Mirror/Glass Cleaner

Juice from one fresh lemon, 2 cups of water or club soda, and 1 teaspoon of cornstarch. Mix all ingredients and pour into plastic spray bottle. Shake well.

#### Oven Cleaner

Mix equal parts of Castile soap, Borax and water. Let mixture set for 20 minutes and scrub with mixture of baking soda and salt.

#### Pet Stains

Soak stained area in warm soapy water. Sponge with equal parts of water and white vinegar. Blot dry.

#### Rubber and Vinyl Floor Cleaner

Mix together 1/2 cup chlorine bleach, 1/4 cup white vinegar, 1/4 cup washing soda or sodium carbonate and 1 gallon of water.

#### Rug and Upholstery Cleaner

Sprinkle with corn starch, let set for 5 minutes and vacuum.

#### Shower-Door Track Cleaning

Pour full-strength vinegar into the track, let soak for a few minutes, rinse.

#### Silver Cleaning and Polish

Soak silver in 1 quart of boiling water with 1 teaspoon baking soda, 1 teaspoon salt and a small piece of aluminum foil. Polish with toothpaste and rinse.

#### Sink/Bathtub Stains

Scrub with paste made from cream of tartar and hydrogen peroxide.

#### Slug and Snail Poison

Pour beer in flat container and place below ground level in infested area.

#### Soap Film on Fiberglass Surface

Apply baking soda with damp cloth, rub and rinse off residue well.

### Soap Film/Mildew on Shower Curtain

Pour full-strength vinegar on shower curtain to remove soap film and mildew.

### Spot Remover

Club soda for stains from fruit juice, tea, gravy, ketchup and mud; immediate cold water for blood stains; lemon juice for ink and perspiration stains; and beaten egg whites for leather stains.

### Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Pour in baking soda and scrub well; or use a paste consisting of Borax and lemon juice or white vinegar and scrub well.

### Water Spot Treatment Polish

Non-gel toothpaste, baking soda and pecan. Apply equal parts of toothpaste and baking soda with soft, damp cloth. Rinse out the cloth and wipe off any residue. When the finish is smooth, buff with a clean soft cloth. Restore color and shine by rubbing the spot with the meat of a half pecan, then buff.

### Wood Polish

1 teaspoon lemon oil, juice of one lemon, 1 teaspoon of brandy or whisky, and one teaspoon of water. Mix and apply with soft cloth. Must be made fresh each time.

## **Pest Repellent**

### Ant Repellent

Sprinkle cucumber peelings near ant infestations; or sprinkle red chilli pepper, cream of tartar powder, salt or sage near ant infestations.

### Dog House Flea Repellent

Wash dog house with salt water. Scatter fresh pine needles or cedar shavings under your pet's sleeping pad. Keep bedding clean.

### Insecticide

Mix dishwashing liquid and water and spray on infected area.

**Note:** Thanks to the Los Angeles County Department of Public Works, Environmental Programs Division for the development of most of the above material. Click here on [LADPW](#) to visit their website.

Another good source for information on Household Hazardous Waste is a booklet developed by Toxic Use Reduction Institute at the University of Massachusetts at Lowell. Click here on [TURI HHW Booklet](#) to view this material.