

Household Hazardous Waste

Hazardous Materials in the Home

Many of the chemicals you use around the house can harm you, your family and the environment if used or disposed of improperly. It's important to read the product labels to safely store, use, and dispose of potentially hazardous materials. When these chemicals are not used entirely, they become household hazardous waste. Household hazardous waste must be disposed of properly or it can harm sanitation workers, create problems in sewage treatment plants and landfills, or pollute the water, land and/or air. Decreasing and removing hazardous products from residential homes reduces the risk of fire hazards and the potential for accidental poisonings. The following are examples of products considered household hazardous waste and tips for handling and properly recycling or disposing of household hazardous waste.



Commonly Used Products that May be Hazardous

Automotive Products

- Antifreeze
- Used oil, brake and transmission fluid
- Gasoline, diesel, and fuel additives
- Solvents and degreasers

Paints, Solvents and Woodworking Supplies

- Oil-based paints
- Paint thinners and strippers
- Stains and finishes

Household Cleaners

- Polishes and cleaners
- Drain openers
- Oven cleaners
- Solvents

Fertilizers, Pesticides and Herbicides

- Weed killer
- Ant poison

Batteries and Light Bulbs

- Compact Florescent Light bulbs (CFL)
- Rechargeable batteries
- Fluorescent light bulbs

Miscellaneous

- Pool and spa chemicals
- Propane tanks and compressed gas cylinders
- Film developing chemicals
- Nail polish and removers
- Insect repellents
- Lighter fluid

Six Tips for Safe Storage, Use and Disposal of Household Hazardous Materials

1. Read the label **FIRST!** Labels tell you:

- How to use the product safely and effectively
- How to store the product safely to keep you and your family safe
- How to dispose of the unused product
- First aid instructions are typically included
- Phone numbers to call for help or more information



2. Buy the right product for the job

Look for the least toxic product that will get the job done. Avoid products labeled “Danger” or “Poison.” Products labeled “Warning” or “Caution” are less hazardous. *Most to least toxic:* Danger → Warning → Caution → No warning label

3. Buy the right amount for your needs

Don't stock up on products; purchase only what you need.

4. Keep products in their original containers

It is very dangerous to fill food and beverage containers with chemicals. Children may confuse a chemical in a familiar juice or soda container as a beverage. Additionally, products in original packages and containers are easier to dispose, because the instructions for handling the materials are typically printed on the label.

5. Never mix chemicals

Don't mix different household chemicals together. The mixture may produce a poisonous gas. In addition, mixed chemicals become difficult to dispose of safely and properly.

6. Dispose of household hazardous waste carefully

The best way to keep household products from becoming hazardous waste is to use the entirety of the chemical products for their intended purpose. If you or someone you know cannot use the product, be sure to dispose of the chemical carefully and responsibly.

Household hazardous waste disposal

Household hazardous waste should not be disposed of in the trash, down the drain, or poured on the ground. Some chemical wastes, like used motor oil, rechargeable batteries, and electronic-waste can be recycled at local businesses. Check with the business where the product was purchased to determine if the product can be recycled with the business or the business can recommend a local recycling center.

Do **not** mix products or pour other chemicals into used motor oil! Once contaminated with other substances, the oil becomes difficult or impossible to recycle.

Water-based latex paint can be safely and legally disposed of in regular household garbage IF it is completely dried out. Mixing the paint with kitty litter, concrete-mix, or soil will help speed the drying process. Empty or dried-out cans of paint can be discarded in the trash if the lids are removed.

Other household hazardous wastes can be disposed of through local government household hazardous waste programs. For information about household hazardous waste programs in Adams, Arapahoe, and Douglas Counties, call the Tri-County Health Department at 303-846-6249.

Additional Resources:



- Tri-County Health Department's **Household Chemical Information Hotline** at (303) 846-6249 or <http://www.tchd.org/250/Home-Chemical-Waste>
- Health & Safety Information on Household Products (National Institutes of Health) at <http://hpd.nlm.nih.gov/index.htm>
- **Earth's 911: The Environmental Hotline** at 1-800-CLEANUP or www.earth911.com
- Rocky Mountain Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222 or <http://www.rmpdc.org/>
- Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment at 303-692-3320 or <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/hhw>