
Disposal of Household Hazardous Waste

Cornell Cooperative Extension, New York State College of Human Ecology

Many products found in your kitchen, bathroom, garage, or garden shed are potentially hazardous substances. Because of their chemical nature they can poison, corrode, explode, or burst into flame when handled improperly. When discarded, they are household hazardous wastes.

Motor oil, paints, pesticides, antifreeze, wood preservatives, batteries, and some household cleaners contain solvents, petroleum products, heavy metals, or other toxic chemicals. When these products are dumped in the trash or poured down the drain, their hazardous chemicals can injure other people or contaminate drinking water sources.

To Prevent Drinking Water Contamination

- NEVER** bury household waste.
- NEVER** dump waste along the side of the road.
- NEVER** pour waste into a street drain or storm sewer.
- USE** only the amount of a product that is absolutely necessary.
- USE** hazardous household products as infrequently as possible.

What is the best way to dispose of potentially hazardous household products?

The best advice is, DON'T. If you cannot use up the product, think of someone who can. A neighbor, school, youth group, church, or service organization may be very pleased to share your leftover cleaning solution, paint, fertilizer, gasoline, or insect spray. When shopping, buy only the house, yard, and automobile products you need, and purchase these products in quantities that you will use up. Finally, consider less toxic alternatives for products that are potentially hazardous. References for nontoxic alternatives are included at the end of this fact sheet.

If you must dispose of a household product, consider the following guidelines:

- USE COLLECTION DAYS** for household hazardous waste whenever possible.
- DO NOT** mix wastes; this could create a violent reaction or form a more hazardous product.
- DO NOT** put liquid waste in the trash.
- DO NOT** discard large quantities of household waste at one time—for example, a shelf of old paints or several gallons of used antifreeze.

Remember: recycle a product or hold it for a collection day whenever possible!

Key to Disposal Instructions

The following chart offers general disposal recommendations for potentially hazardous products likely to be in your home. When more than one disposal method is given, the first is preferred and the others should be used when the first is not feasible.

Household refuse: discard with household refuse that is carried to a sanitary landfill or municipal incinerator. Rinse containers with lots of water before discarding in trash.

Wrapped refuse: wrap in newspaper and then plastic before adding to household refuse.

Small amount down drain: pour small quantities down drain (or toilet) with plenty of water; rinse container thoroughly, then discard as household refuse. If the capacity of the sewage or septic system is small or if large amounts are to be disposed, recycle or wait for a hazardous waste collection day.

Solidify/double wrap: solidify with absorbent material such as kitty litter, sawdust, charcoal, or sand. Allow to dry, then double wrap in plastic and discard with household refuse.

Evaporate/double wrap: allow to evaporate outside away from children or pets; double wrap container in plastic, then discard with household refuse.

Special recycling center: take product to a special recycling facility, or return to manufacturer.

Do not discard—collection day: do not discard; store for community household hazardous waste collection or call the local Cooperative Extension association, Department of Environmental Conservation, or Department of Health for specific disposal instructions.

Item Disposal Instructions

Home Care and Maintenance

batteries (D cell or smaller)	special recycling center
mercury	wrapped refuse
hearing aid batteries	special recycling center (hospital or hearing aid center)
cleaners (<i>Do not mix chlorine and ammonia-base cleaners.</i>)	
ammonia base	small amount down drain
basin, tub, tile	small amount down drain
bleach	small amount down drain
drain (lye base)*	small amount down drain
powder/abrasive	household refuse
mildew (fungicide)	do not discard—collection day
oven (lye base)*	wrapped refuse
toilet bowl*	small amount down drain
upholstery/rug (detergent base)	small amount down drain
upholstery/rug (solvent base)	small amount down drain
window	do not discard—collection day
disinfectants*	evaporate/double wrap
dry cleaning fluid	small amount down drain
	small amount down drain
	do not discard—collection day
	evaporate/double wrap
fiberglass (epoxy resin)	do not discard—collection day
	solidify resin and hardener, then treat as wrapped refuse
fluorescent lamp ballast (manufactured prior to 1978 or without label stating it contains <i>no PCBs</i>)	do not discard—collection day
glue (solvent base)	do not discard—collection day
	evaporate/double wrap
glue (water base)	evaporate/double wrap
mothballs	do not discard—collection day
paint or stain	
latex	evaporate/double wrap
	solidify/double wrap
oil	do not discard—collection day
primer	do not discard—collection day
rust	do not discard—collection day
stain	do not discard—collection day
varnish	do not discard—collection day
wood preservative	do not discard—collection day
paint remover	do not discard—collection day
	evaporate/double wrap
paint thinner	do not discard—collection day
	evaporate/double wrap
paintbrush cleaner (phosphate base)*	small amount down drain
paintbrush cleaner (solvent base)	do not discard—collection day
paint/varnish stripper (lye base)*	small amount down drain

Item Disposal Instructions

Personal Care

cosmetics	household refuse
hair permanent solution	small amount down drain
hair straightener	small amount down drain
medicines, liquid*	small amount down drain
medicines, nonliquid	small amount down drain
	wrapped refuse
nail polish	solidify/double wrap
	evaporate/double wrap
nail polish remover	do not discard—collection day
	evaporate/double wrap
	small amount down drain
perfume	small amount down drain
shaving lotion	small amount down drain
shoe polish	household refuse
shoe dye	do not discard—collection day

Item	Disposal Instructions
polish	
copper	evaporate/double wrap solidify/double wrap
floor	do not discard—collection day
furniture (solvent base)	do not discard—collection day
silver	solidify/double wrap evaporate/double wrap
rust remover (phosphoric acid base)	small amount down drain
smoke detector (ionization type)	special recycling center return to manufacturer
spot remover (solvent base)	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap
turpentine	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap (store sludge for collection day)

Automobile and Motor Care

antifreeze (less than 1 gal.)*	small amount down drain special recycling center
automatic transmission fluid	special recycling center
batteries	special recycling center
brake fluid	special recycling center
carburetor cleaner	do not discard—collection day
degreasing chemicals	do not discard—collection day
diesel fuel	special recycling center
enamel	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap
fuel oil	special recycling center
gasoline	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap
kerosene	special recycling center
light lubricating oil	special recycling center
motor oil	special recycling center
polish or wax	
automobile	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap
chrome (solvent base)	do not discard—collection day evaporate/double wrap
windshield washer fluid	small amount down drain

Lawn and Garden Care

fertilizer (liquid, less than 1 gal.)	wrapped refuse
fertilizer (less than 5 lbs. dry; less than 25 lbs. lawn fertilizer/pesticide)	wrapped refuse
mothballs	do not discard—collection day
pesticides	
fungicides	do not discard—collection day
swimming pool chemicals (undiluted)	do not discard—collection day

Item	Disposal Instructions
poison (rat/mouse) (arsenic base)	do not discard—collection day
poison (rat/mouse) (warfarin base)	wrapped refuse
roach/ant killer	do not discard—collection day
flea collar	do not discard—collection day
weed killers	do not discard—collection day
garden insecticides	do not discard—collection day

Motor Oil

By law, an auto service or repair station, or any station that changes oil, must accept used motor oil for recycling. To dispose of used motor oil, which contains hazardous petroleum products, first drain the oil through a funnel into a clean container that can be tightly sealed. Then deliver it to your local recycling center. Your Cooperative Extension association or local health department can help you find the nearest center.

Pesticides

Homeowners often store unused pesticides for many years. Do not use the following banned pesticides: aldrin, chlordane, DBCP, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, kepone, lindane, mirex, silvex, toxaphene, 2,4,5-T. Check with your local Cooperative Extension association, Department of Environmental Conservation, or Department of Health for names of other pesticides banned by your state.

Some pesticides have been banned by the government because they are a health risk. Waste pesticides that have been banned, as well as unopened containers of household pesticides, usually can be returned either to the store from which they were purchased or directly to the manufacturer.

Special precautions should be taken when disposing of empty pesticide containers. Rinse the container three times with water and use the rinse water in the same manner the original pesticide was intended. Then wrap the container securely in plastic or newspaper and dispose of it with other household refuse.

Aerosols

Only discard completely empty aerosol cans. Before discarding, spray the contents outside and away from humans or animals until the can is completely empty. Then discard the can with household refuse. Since the contents are under pressure, *never put aerosol cans in a trash compactor or incinerator, even when empty.*

Remember the Rules

- Buy** only what you need, and use products up.
- Use** nontoxic alternatives whenever possible.
- Recycle** leftovers or save them for a hazardous waste collection day.
- Read** labels carefully, observing the precautions for use and following the recommendations for disposal.
- Never** bury waste, dump waste along the side of the road, or pour waste into a street drain or storm sewer.

Bibliography

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References for Nontoxic Alternatives

Although these references contain many good suggestions, be certain that the alternative product is indeed less hazardous than the commercially manufactured one.

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Disclaimer

The information in this fact sheet has been carefully documented and reviewed. The suggestions contained herein advise safe disposal of products using the best technology available at the present time. The authors assume no liability for the effectiveness or results of the procedures described. Recycling or hazardous waste collection days are the recommended disposal methods for all household hazardous wastes.



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