

## Household Toxics Disposal

Many products we use to make life easier around the house are toxic. A substance is considered toxic or hazardous if it is flammable, explosive/reactive, corrosive/caustic, poisonous, or irritating.

We now know that some hazardous products buried in landfills for years are turning up in our groundwater and wells. We must be responsible for getting rid of our waste now so as not to affect future generations. Before purchasing a product, make sure you can easily dispose of any excess.

Listed below are the symbols commonly used to denote toxic or hazardous substances and their specific dangers.

Listed on the next two pages are some of the more common household hazardous waste products and their current recommended recycling and disposal options. Some of these options are still questionable but, as yet, no safer options exist. Many options refer to hazardous waste collection. Check with your local Department of Public Works for availability and dates.



**Figure 1.**

**FLAMMABLE**

can easily be set on fire.



**Figure 2.**

**EXPLOSIVE/REACTIVE**

can explode through exposure to heat, sudden shock, or pressure.



**Figure 3.**

**TOXIC/POISONOUS**

capable of causing injury or death through ingestion, inhalation, or absorption.



**Figure 4.**

**CORROSIVE/CAUSTIC**

can burn and destroy living tissue.



**Figure 5.**

**IRRITATING**

can cause irritation, inflammation, or soreness to mucous membranes, eyes, and skin.

## HOUSEHOLD TOXICS DISPOSAL/RECYCLING OPTIONS

PRODUCT	DISPOSAL OPTIONS	RECYCLING OPTIONS
Pesticides	Follow directions on the label; take any leftovers to hazardous waste collection facility. Empty containers should be triple rinsed and wrapped in newspapers before being put in trash.	Give excess to others.
Paint (latex)	Remove lid in ventilated area, let solidify, and put in trash.	Give to school, theater, or other nonprofit group.
Paint (oil-based)	Seal can and take to hazardous waste collection facility	Give to school, theater, or other nonprofit group.
Paint Thinner	Take to hazardous waste collection facility.	Can be reused to clean brushes. Keep in closed container, allow contaminants to settle. Filter and store in metal or plastic container. (Take concentrated contaminants to hazardous waste collection facility.)
Motor Oil		Take to authorized used motor oil collection site.
Auto batteries		Trade in or take to local battery shop for recycling
Antifreeze		Some service stations will accept.
Transmission Fluid		Take to service station.
Gasoline	Take to hazardous waste collection facility.	
Aerosol Cans (empty)	Put in trash.	
Mothballs	Use up. Rinse container and put in trash. Take any leftovers to hazardous waste collection facility.	
Oven Cleaner	Use up. Rinse container and put in trash. Take any leftovers to hazardous waste collection facility.	
Floor and furniture polish	Do not dispose of. Store safely until taken to hazardous waste collection facility.	
Chlorine Bleach	Use up.	Give excess to others.
Powder Cleaners	Use up.	
Toilet cleaner	Do not dispose of. Store safely until taken to hazardous waste collection facility	
Metal Polish	Allow to solidify and place in trash.	
Ammonia Cleaners	Use up.	Give excess to others.

## READ THE LABEL

By law, household products must now carry a warning label if they pose a possible threat to users. Look for the following words: Poison or Danger, Warning or Caution. They can usually be found in small print on the back of the container. Do not be fooled. The word "nontoxic" is an advertising word and lacks regulatory definition.

- **POISON/DANGE**  
product is extremely flammable, corrosive, or highly toxic. Small doses can be fatal to adults.
- **WARNING**  
product is moderately toxic.
- **CAUTION**  
product is slightly toxic.

### Resources:

*The Consumer's Handbook for Reducing Solid Waste.* Aug. 1992. USEPA, EPA, 530-K-92-003.

*Hazardous Materials: A Citizen's Orientation.* Jan. 1990. FEMA, USEPA, USDOT, HS-5.

Anderson, B. *Ecologue -- The Environmental Catalogue and Consumer's Guide for a Safe Earth.* 1990. Prentice Hall Press.

Tasaday, L. and K. Stevenson. *Shopping for a Better Environment.* 1991. NY, NY: Meadowbrook Press.

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