

## Storage & Handling of Household Hazardous Waste

Virtually every household produces hazardous waste and many people do not even realize it. Many of the products we use around our house contain chemicals that can cause harm to our health and our environment if not used and disposed of properly. Household hazardous wastes (HHW) are not regulated by the same laws that apply to farm or industrial hazardous wastes. Less strict regulations allow disposal of HHW in approved sanitary landfills. However, participating in collection/recycling programs for HHW offers an even better solution for minimizing the pollution potential from these wastes. Homeowners are urged to take advantage of HHW collection programs offered by local businesses and by city or county governments.

It is nearly impossible to get pollutants out of water once they get there. Read the label. If a product contains a hazardous substance, the front label must include a warning and a description of the hazard. Most hazardous household products can be grouped into five major categories:

- Automotive products.
- Household cleaners.
- Paint and solvents.
- Pesticides.
- Electronic products.

Rules for disposing of household hazardous waste:

- Do not mix products unless you know what you are doing.
- Do not flush wastes down your sink or toilet.
- Never burn, dump, or bury hazardous waste.
- Do not pour hazardous waste into ditches, storm drains or gutters.
- **DO RECYCLE** products and containers whenever possible.

Potentially hazardous substances that are categorized as boat or automotive equipment maintenance products are batteries, motor oil, grease and other lubricants, antifreeze, and gasoline and related petroleum products. These pollutants can gravely affect water quality and cause die off of marine plants and animals. Any spills that cause a sheen or discoloration of any size must be reported to the National Response Center at 800-424-8802.

Store waste oil in closed, labeled containers (plastic milk jugs work well) until you can take the oil to be recycled. Our county government provides used oil collection centers for citizens at the county landfill, transfer stations and convenience centers.

Vehicle and boat batteries **cannot** be disposed of in landfills. The only satisfactory way to dispose of old batteries is to recycle them. All stores that sell batteries will take back used batteries. Craven county provides collection centers for lead acid batteries in the same location as for collection used oil -- county landfill, transfer stations and convenience centers. Household hazardous waste collection days sponsored by the Coastal Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (CRSWMA) will take vehicle batteries. Contact local solid waste department, county Cooperative Extension Center or regional Division of Solid Waste Management for more information on where to recycle batteries or on upcoming HHW collection days.

Antifreeze contains chemicals which are poisonous to animals and humans. Pets will lap up an antifreeze puddle because it tastes sweet. This is often fatal. Therefore, it is very important to store your antifreeze in a safe place, secured from children and pets. Do not pour your antifreeze into your septic system. The antifreeze will kill the beneficial organisms in your septic system that make it work. Used or excess antifreeze should be recycled. Antifreeze **cannot** be disposed of in a sanitary landfill. Some service stations and national auto parts stores will take antifreeze. Household hazardous waste collection days will often take antifreeze.

Oil-based paints have a solvent base that can be harmful to septic systems and sewage systems if the paint is poured down the drain. Use up what is left over or drop off the remainder at a HHW collection day. Small quantities of latex paint that need to be disposed of should first be dried out in a well-ventilated area away from children and pets, flames, or anything that might spark. This can be disposed of in household garbage.

Solvents can be paint thinners, paint strippers, refrigerants, degreasers, certain glues, and even fingernail polish remover. Some solvents, such as paint thinner, can be cleaned and reused. Clean dirty solvents by placing in a closed transparent container and storing them until the paint or other material settles to the bottom. After the sludge has settled out, pour the clean, reusable solvent off the top. Let the sludge dry and take it to a

permitted landfill or household hazardous waste collection site.

Old computer monitors, computer game consoles, cell phone batteries are just a few types of electronic waste that contain lead or mercury. Several local governments offer recycling opportunities for electronic and computer recycling HHW collection days sponsored by the Coastal Regional Solid Waste Management Authority (CRSWMA).

For more information about hazardous wastes, contact your local government solid waste department, community recycling coordinator, county Cooperative Extension Center or your regional Division of Solid Waste Management .

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