

Recommended Disposal Methods

Recyclable	Automatic transmission fluid Battery Fuel (all types) Motor oil
Reusable	Paint brush cleaner Paint thinner Turpentine
Down Drain with Plenty of Water	Ammonia cleaners Drain cleaners Window cleaner Cosmetics
Sanitary Landfill	Aerosol cans Oven cleaner Nail polish Battery acid Fertilizer
Collection Day or Licensed Contractor	Floor care products and furniture polish Antifreeze Automatic transmission fluid Motor oil Paint brush cleaner Glue (solvent based) Paint (latex) Paint (all other types) Paint thinner Paint stripper Turpentine Fungicides Herbicides and insecticides Lighter fluid Old fire alarms Mercury batteries



Dear Friend,
Environmental education is the best insurance that future generations will enjoy the benefits of a healthy planet. Knowing the alternatives to products that result in hazardous wastes, and learning the proper disposal method for hazardous wastes for which there are no alternatives, are important parts of this education.

Among the biggest culprits of the hazardous waste problem are the products we use around our homes. These products are known as household hazardous waste. Aerosol cans, drain cleaners, paint, pesticides, and bathroom cleaners are only a few of the hazardous products that are commonly used in homes. Using simple ingredients, you can create less toxic substitutes for common household products.

This brochure contains helpful advice on how to dispose of household hazardous waste and important tips on how eliminate or reduce their use in your home. The payoff for eliminating hazards from your everyday life and responsibly disposing of hazardous waste is a safer and cleaner Earth for everyone.

Sincerely,

Jose Peralata
13th Senate District



New York State Senate
Albany, NY 1224

FROM
STATE SENATOR
JOSE PERALTA
13th Senate District

District Office:
32-37 Junction Blvd.
East Elmhurst, NY 11369
(718) 205-3881

Albany Office:
415 Legislative Office Bldg.
Albany, NY 12247
(518) 455-2529

INFORMATION REGARDING HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE





Household Hazardous Wastes

Household hazardous wastes (HHW) are toxic products that are commonly used around the home. The average household contains between three and 10 gallons of materials that are hazardous to human health or to the environment.

A substance is considered hazardous if it can catch fire, if it can react or explode when mixed with other substances, if it is corrosive, or if it is toxic. Listed below are some common toxic household products.

- ▶ Drain cleaner
- ▶ Motor oil or gasoline
- ▶ Furniture polish
- ▶ Lawn care products
- ▶ Automotive batteries
- ▶ Insect repellent
- ▶ Weed killer
- ▶ Oven cleaner
- ▶ Paint, remover and thinner

Characteristics of Household Hazardous Wastes

Toxicity – They may cause injury or death upon ingestion, absorption or inhalation. In smaller amounts, they may be irritants that can cause soreness or inflammation of membranes or the respiratory system.

Corrosivity – They eat away materials and living tissue by chemical action.

Ignitability – They present a fire hazard because they are extremely flammable at relatively low temperatures.

Reactivity – They tend to create a vigorous reaction with water or other substances, resulting in an explosion and the generation of toxic fumes.

The Effect of Household Hazardous Waste

Toxins can enter the body through the skin, or by inhalation or ingestion. Acute or short-term exposure with a toxin produces effects that are evident soon after exposure. Depending on the chemical and the dosage, effects may range from mild to severe. Breathing a small amount of substance may cause a temporary skin or eye irritation, while breathing a large amount of the same substance might be deadly. The effects of HHW may also create environmental problems if done improperly.

What You Can Do to Help

- ▶ Do not throw household hazardous waste (HHW) into the garbage;
- ▶ Do not dump HHWs down the drain, as this can lead to contamination of septic tanks and sewer systems; and
- ▶ Do not dispose of HHW into landfills.

The best way to combat the problem of disposing household hazardous waste is to reduce the amount of use. However, when you cannot avoid using HHWs, the preferred method for proper collection of household hazardous waste is a local collection event or facility. To find the collection site nearest you, call the Department of Environmental Conservation at (518) 402-8678 or visit their website www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8780.html.

Radon in Your Home



Radon test kit. Source: National Cancer Institute

Radon is a colorless, odorless gas that results from the natural breakdown of uranium in soil, rock and water. While radon in small amounts is naturally present in the air you breathe, unusually high levels can be harmful. Fortunately, there are test kits available that enable you to easily test your home environment for both the presence of radon and its levels. To purchase a test kit, call the NYS Department of Health's Center for Environmental Health at (518) 402-7556 between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Kits come with complete instructions and are simple to use. For more details on radon, testing and/or the effects of exposure, you may contact the National Radon Hotline at (800) 55RA-DON (557-2366).

▶ #582 3/2013



Alternatives

In many cases, a less toxic product or alternative method can replace toxic household substances. Some alternative, non-toxic products are baking soda, lemon juice, vinegar, salt, soap, and rubbing alcohol. Below is a listing of toxic products and the alternate substances to use.

Product	Alternative
Ammonia-based cleaners	Vinegar, salt and water mix for surfaces; baking soda and water for bathrooms
Bleach cleaners	For laundry use ½ cup white vinegar, baking soda or borax
Abrasive cleaners	Rub area with ½ lemon dipped in borax, rinse dry
Drain cleaners	Use a plunger, flush drain with boiling water, ¼ cup baking soda and 2 oz. vinegar
Disinfectants	½ cup borax in one gallon of water
Rug cleaners	Mix baking soda with a spice such as clove or cinnamon, sprinkle on rug and vacuum
Floors and furniture polish	1 part lemon mixed with 2 parts olive or vegetable oil
Brass polish	Worcestershire sauce
Ant traps	Red chili powder at entry points

While some alternative homemade methods may not be completely non-toxic, they are safer than commercial brands. You should use extra caution when using some ingredients as they are highly reactive with others. For more ideas on alternatives to products you use every day, visit www.dec.ny.gov/docs/materials_minerals_pdf/hhwcht.pdf



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