



Water Resources Division Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Disposal

Definition

This practice addresses the proper disposal of household hazardous wastes. The average American house contains three to ten gallons of hazardous materials, including items such as automotive products, cleaners, paint, and pesticides. Proper purchase, use, storage, and disposal of hazardous materials will prevent these types of wastes from entering the environment, and will minimize exposure risks to humans.

Materials considered hazardous include those with the following properties:

Corrosive: Corrodes steel or burns skin. Can also be referred to as caustic;

Flammable: Burns readily or has a low flashpoint;

Poisonous: Is harmful to human or aquatic life. Can also be referred to as toxic; and

Reactive: Has potential to explode or give off poisonous gases. Can also be referred to as volatile.

For the proper disposal of quantities of hazardous waste over one (1) gallon, contact the [Michigan Department of Environmental Quality \(MDEQ\) Office of Waste Management and Radiological Protection](#), at 517-284-6857.

Pollutants Controlled

The proper disposal of hazardous materials will prevent them from entering surface waters or contaminating groundwater supplies.

General Considerations

Improper disposal methods, such as pouring wastes into septic tanks or sewers, or burying them in backyards, may allow the hazardous waste to enter the ground or surface waters where they can migrate to the water supplies we use for our drinking water. Some hazardous wastes which are discarded in landfills have leached out of the landfill and into the ground water. It is therefore important to dispose of hazardous wastes properly. Follow the guidelines below.

Buying, Storing, and Using Household Hazardous Wastes

- Use alternative household products which are not toxic. See the Table 1 for some ideas;
- Where alternative household products are not available, buy non-toxic products. Look for 'non-toxic' on the label;

- Always read labels carefully before buying and using hazardous products. Be aware of their uses and dangers. If directions are unclear, contact the manufacturer before using;
- If your area is served by septic systems, make sure you buy products which are safe for septic systems. Most products include this type of information on the label;
- Reduce your waste and save money by purchasing only the materials you need and will use;
- Use the product according to the directions on the label, and in a well-ventilated area, where possible. Special care should be taken to avoid eye and skin contact, inhalation or ingestion of these materials. Many hazardous products have dangerous fumes that can burn your skin or irritate your eyes, so consider using gloves and protective eyewear;
- Avoid mixing different products that can cause explosive or poisonous chemical reactions;
- Keep unused portions in their original containers with labels intact and readable. Keep out of the reach of children and pets. Knowing the contents could be a lifesaver in case of accidental poisonings;
- Store out of direct sunlight, in a cool, dry area;
- Use secondary containment to control accidental spills;
- Look up the phone number of the poison control center and place it near or on your phone in case of actual or suspected poisonings;
- Keep on hand Michigan's [Pollution Emergency Alerting System \(PEAS\)](#) toll-free hotline phone number (800-292-4706), for reporting any environmental emergencies, including the spill or release of any hazardous substances.

Disposing of Household Hazardous Wastes

1. Identify materials needing special disposal consideration, based on key words used on the label: caustic, corrosive, explosive, flammable, poisonous, reactive, toxic, or volatile;
2. Whenever possible, reuse and recycle household hazardous wastes. For example:
 - Used motor oil can be recycled;
 - Paint thinners can be reused. Let used solvents and paint thinners set for a while in a closed jar. The dirt and paints will settle to the bottom. The clear top portion can be decanted and reused. The amount of actual waste for disposal will be much less;
 - Offer surplus portions of products that are usable and safely packaged to others, such as unused paint to theater groups, or pesticides to nurseries;
3. Participating agencies in the [Clean Sweep](#) Program will accept pesticides, free of charge, from any Michigan resident. There are currently [18 collection sites](#) across the state;

4. For construction- or demolition-related waste or debris that might contain hazardous substances, refer to the MDEQ's [guidance document](#) on the subject;
3. Some hazardous materials that are no longer usable may need to be taken to a household hazardous waste collection center. A list of collection days and centers scheduled around the state is available from the [MDEQ Office of Waste Management and Radiological Protection](#), at 517-284-6857.

Consult Table 1 for information on disposing of several other common household hazardous wastes.

Community Programs

Many local communities have organized household hazardous waste programs, which typically include:

- A public information and education component, to inform citizens of the potential hazards and risks associated with the products used in their homes, and suitable non-toxic alternatives; and
- A collection component, in which citizens bring their wastes to a common collection point. A licensed hazardous waste transporter sorts and packages the waste, and takes it to a hazardous waste facility that has been licensed to operate by the MDEQ.

If your community doesn't already have a program, consider contacting either your local or county government, or the [MDEQ Office of Waste Management and Radiological Protection](#), for information on starting a household hazardous waste collection day in your community.

This publication is intended for guidance only and may be impacted by changes in legislation, rules, policies, and procedures adopted after the date of publication. Although this publication makes every effort to teach users how to meet applicable compliance obligations, use of this publication does not constitute the rendering of legal advice.

For information or assistance on this publication, please contact the Water Resources Division, Nonpoint Source Program, through the MDEQ Environmental Assistance Center at 800-662-9278. This publication is available in alternative formats upon request.

Table 1. Household Products: Their Hazards, Proper Disposal, and Safer Alternatives

Product	Hazard*	Disposal	Safer Alternative(s)
Automotive			
Antifreeze	F, P	HHW collection, or down drain (to sanitary sewer). No more than one (1) gallon per week to septic system	
Car Batteries	C	Service station or HHW collection	
Motor Oil	F, P	Service station or HHW collection	
Gasoline/Kerosene	F, P	HHW collection	
Cleaners			
Floor Polish	F	HHW collection	Products without petroleum distillates
Furniture Polish	C, F	HHW collection	Lemon oil beeswax
Drain Cleaner	C, P	Down drain (to sanitary sewer) with lots of water. HHW collection if on septic system	Plunger; plumber's snake; 1 cup each vinegar, baking soda, & salt into drain, let stand 15 minutes, flush w/ boiling water
Oven Cleaner	C, P	Down drain (to sanitary sewer) with lots of water. HHW collection if on septic system	Sprinkle baking soda & salt on spills, wipe
Toilet Bowl Cleaner	C, P	Down drain (to sanitary sewer) with lots of water. If on septic system, do not flush large amounts; HHW collection instead	Let ½ cup chlorine bleach stand 30 minutes, brush, flush
Chlorine Bleach	C, R	Down drain with lots of water. Never mix with ammonia	
Paint			
Latex Paint	P	Allow to solidify & dispose of in trash	
Oil-Based Paint	F, P	HHW collection	Latex paint
Lead-Based Paint	F, P	HHW collection	Latex paint
Paint Thinner/ Turpentine/ Mineral Spirits/Solvents	F, P	HHW collection	Sandpaper, sander
Pesticides			
Wood Preservatives	P	HHW collection; Clean Sweep	Wolmanized™ lumber, vs. pentachlorophenol
Weed Killer	P	HHW collection; Clean Sweep	Pull weeds; keep grass short
Roach & Ant Killer	F, P	HHW collection; Clean Sweep	Boric acid

*C = corrosive; F = flammable; P = poisonous; R = reactive.