



## Household Hazardous Waste Fact Sheet

### *What is Household Hazardous Waste?*

Many hazardous products and chemicals such as fuel, cleaners, oils and pesticides are used in and around the home every day. When improperly discarded, these products are called household hazardous waste (HHW). HHWs are discarded materials and products that are ignitable, corrosive, reactive, toxic or otherwise listed as hazardous by the EPA. Products used and disposed of by a typical residence may contain more than 100 hazardous substances including:

- Batteries
- Cleaners
- Cosmetics
- Fluorescent light bulbs
- Glues
- Heating oil
- Insecticides and pesticides
- Ink
- Medicines
- Motor oil, fuel and automotive supplies
- Paints, thinners, stains and varnishes
- Polishes
- Swimming pool chemicals
- Smoke detectors
- Thermometers
- Fuel

### *HHW is a Serious Threat*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average American household generates 20 pounds of HHW each year. As much as 100 pounds of HHW can accumulate in the home and remain there until the resident moves or undertakes a thorough spring cleaning.

Since the chemicals found in HHW can cause soil and groundwater contamination, generate hazardous emissions at landfills and disrupt water treatment plants, it is important to dispose of HHW properly. Many solid waste treatment facilities are currently required to screen for HHW to avoid operating under restrictive hazardous waste laws. Furthermore, many communities may be required to establish a HHW collection program in order to qualify for permits to manage storm water.

### *Safe Handling Tips*

The best way to handle household hazardous materials is to completely use the product before disposing of the container. If this is not possible, then the next alternative is to return unused portions to your community household hazardous waste clean-up day. Keep products in their original package with all labels intact. If the container is leaking, place it in a thick plastic bag. Pack the products in a plastic-lined cardboard box to prevent leaks and breakage.

Household hazardous waste clean-up days are for household wastes only. No industrial or commercial wastes and no containers larger than five gallons are accepted. Explosives, radioactive material and medical wastes are also unacceptable.

HHW can be dangerous to people and pets who come in contact with them. HHW can endanger water supplies, damage sewage treatment systems, and cause other environmental damage. Only use the products as directed. **DO NOT:**



- Flush HHWs down the toilet
- Pour HHWs down the sink
- Pour HHWs down a storm drain
- Pour HHWs on the ground

Contact your local health department or the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste to determine whether your community has a household hazardous waste collection program.

### ***Identify HHW***

Reduce the amount of potentially hazardous products in your home and eliminate what you throw away by following these easy steps:

#### **1. Before you buy:**

- Read the labels and be aware of what they mean.
- Look for these words on labels; they tell you what products may need special handling or disposal.

Caution  
Combustible  
Corrosive  
Danger  
Explosive

Flammable  
Poison  
Toxic  
Volatile  
Warning

- Buy only what you can use entirely.
- Select a product best suited for the job.

#### **2. After you buy:**

- Read label precautions and follow directions for safe use.
- Recycle/dispose of empty containers properly. Clean up spilled products properly.
- Share what you can't use with friends or neighbors.
- Store properly.
- Use recommended amounts; more is not necessarily better.
- Use the child-resistant closures and keep them on tightly.

### ***For More Information, Please Contact:***

Division of Drinking Water, Source Protection Program - (801) 536-4200