

Household Hazardous Waste

What is it?

Many products used in the home, garden, garage and hobby shop contain hazardous ingredients and need to be used and stored safely. Leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients are considered to be, "Household Hazardous Waste" or "HHW."

Why has it become a problem?

In the Trash

On the Navajo Nation, household garbage is taken to landfills. While the quantity you generate in your home may seem small, consider everyone who lives within your community disposing of their waste over a 50 period. The cumulative amount is considerable, so proper handling is important. At these landfills, buried household hazardous waste can seep into ground water and contaminate drinking water or the surrounding soil. Moreover, when chemicals are dumped into trash trucks, they can combine and react with other materials in the truck causing dangerous reactions and endangering collection drivers.

On the Ground

If you pour hazardous household waste in ditches, storm drains, or gutters; it can poison plants and wildlife, contaminate the soil, and harm children and adults who come in contact with it. When it rains, the hazardous household waste travels directly to nearby streams, rivers, and lakes.

Down the Drain

Household sewage enters a septic system, wastewater from your home goes into a tank buried underground. The solids settle out and partially decompose. The remaining wastewater then goes into a drain field where the natural, ongoing processes in the soil help to further break down the wastewater. Toxic materials in that wastewater can kill the helpful bacteria and the system will not operate properly. Some toxic materials move through the soil untreated or unchanged. When this happens groundwater or surface waters may become contaminated. In addition, hazardous household wastes poured down the drain may corrode the plumbing or collect in the trap and release fumes through the drains.

Safer Alternatives

Non-toxic alternatives to everyday household cleaners...

Cleaner	Alternatives
Dain Cleaner	Pour ½ cup of baking soda down the drain. Add ½ cup white vinegar and cover the drain. Pour a kettle of boiling water down after the fizzing stops.
Oven Cleaner	"Believe It Or Not Oven Cleaner" – Sprinkler water generously over bottom of oven. Cover grime with baking soda. Let sit overnight. Wipe up grease next morning with green scouring pad. Rinse well.
All Purpose Cleaner	Dissolve 4 Tbls. baking soda in 1 qt. Warm water, OR 2/3rd cup of baking soda, ¼ cup vinegar, ¼ cup ammonia, and 1 gallon warm water.
Furniture Polish	Mix 1 teaspoon of lemon juice in 1 pint of mineral or vegetable oil, and wipe furniture.
Rug Deodorizer	Deodorize dry carpets by sprinkling liberally with baking soda. Wait at least 15 minutes and vacuum. Repeat if necessary.
Floor Cleaners	Add ½ cup of white vinegar, ¼ cup of ammonia, ¼ cup of lemon juice to a gallon of water and mop. (HINT: To preserve linoleum floors, add a capful of baby oil to mop water)
Mothballs	Use cedar chips, lavender flowers, rosemary, or mint.

Adjust recipes by increasing or reducing ingredient amounts according to your needs: Vinegar, lemon juice, and ammonia cut grease and oil; baking soda deodorizes; borax disinfects; washing soda cleans, cuts grease, and increases the cleaning power of soap.

THE NAVAJO NATION

Division of Community Development



Solid Waste Management Program

Household Hazardous Waste

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Hazardous Products

How do you know if it is hazardous?

READ THE LABEL! Look for the words Poison, Warning or Caution on the product label.

- **Poison** indicates the highest hazard levels. Poison means that a product is highly toxic, and can cause injury or death if ingested, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin
- **Danger** means that a product is either highly toxic, flammable, or corrosive.
- **Warning** and **Caution** both indicate that a product is toxic, corrosive, reactive or flammable

Products that don't have any of these words on the label are least hazardous.

A hazardous product has at least one of the following properties:

- **Toxic:** Poisonous or causes long-term illness (such as cancer). Pesticides, paint thinners, many auto products and some cleaners are toxic. Look for words on the product label like:
 - “Harmful or fatal if swallowed”
 - “Use only in a well-ventilated area” (this means product fumes are toxic)
- **Flammable:** Burns easily. Paint, thinners and other solvent, and auto products are the most flammable home products. Look for words on the product label like:
 - “Do not use near heat or flame.”
 - “Combustible.”
 - “Do not smoke while using this product.”
- **Corrosive:** Eats through materials (acid, for example). Oven cleaners, drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners and auto batteries are common corrosive products. Look for words on the product label like:
 - “Causes severe burns on contact.”
 - “Can burn eyes, skin, throat.”
 - “Do not smoke while using this product.”
- **Reactive:** Can spontaneously ignite or create poisonous vapors when mixed with other products (therefore NEVER mix household products), or can explode when exposed to heat, air, water or shock.

Steps of Precaution



How to use and store hazardous products properly?

- **Always follow directions on the label!**
- **NEVER** use more of the product than is recommended
- **NEVER** mix products! This can lead to explosions or poisonous gas being released
- **NEVER** eat, drink or smoke where hazardous products are being used
- **NEVER** put “HHW” into your household trashcan, this could cause chemicals to mix and possibly creating dangerous reactions.
- **STORE** all hazardous products upright, tightly sealed
- **STORE** containers on high shelves or in locked cabinets away from pets and children
- **STORE** hazardous products in a well-ventilated area
- Keep products in their original containers. If you do have to use a different container, be sure to LABEL adequately for safe use and disposal
- Keep containers dry to prevent corrosion
- If their original container is leaking or damaged, place the entire container in a larger container such as a clean paint can or plastic bucket.
- **BE CAREFUL!**

Disposal Recommendations

A number of problems can occur when we discard hazardous household waste using common disposal methods. Recommendations for proper disposal will depend on both the particular type of waste and the waste disposal options available to the community.

General Disposal Recommendations

1. **Follow the label instructions.** Some labels give disposal recommendations. Read the label carefully and follow the manufacturer's recommendations
2. **Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without.** When products are fully used up as intended there is no hazardous waste. Buy only as much as you need!
3. **Recycle.** Recycling means reclaiming the potential waste so that the product is useable again. Recycling helps reduce the overall demand for hazardous household products and the amount of waste produced.
4. **Donate.** Donate paint, household cleaners, or other products to a local charity, church, or service organization. Such items need to be in original containers with labels.
5. **Throw it in the trash with special treatment.** Some hazardous household wastes are acceptable at landfills if special treatment is followed. Empty hazardous product containers should be rinsed several times before discarding in the trash.
6. **Flush a very small amount, no more than a cup down the drain with plenty of water.** Some hazardous household products like:
 - Windshield washer solution, Alcohol based lotions (perfumes, aftershave), Bleach, Medicine, Toilet bowl cleaner, etc.
7. **Give leftovers to someone who will use them up for their intended purpose.** Reuse products such as paint thinner and paint.