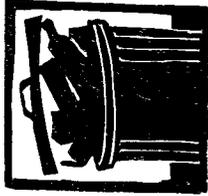


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Disposal: Do It Right Managing Household Wastes



RODUCTION

Many consumers and their communities are concerned about what to do with household wastes that may pose disposal problems. There is a great deal of confusion about what materials do need to be disposed of with special care. This brochure has been produced by the Chemical Specialties Manufacturers Association, the trade association for companies which manufacture household products packaged for consumer use, to answer those questions.

The brochure outlines the process by which our communities dispose of waste. It reviews the evidence which shows that most household waste can be safely disposed of through normal waste disposal systems. It also offers information on how to dispose of household wastes safely, and how to set up special collection days for disposal of those few hazardous materials which do require special handling.

WASTES POSE A DISPOSAL PROBLEM?

Household consumer products—the substances we use to clean, disinfect and protect our homes, our clothing, our furnishings, our dishes—have been manufactured, packaged and tested for home use and safe disposal through normal waste collection systems. What consumers need to know about the product to protect themselves and the environment will usually be on the label instructions.

The safe disposal of any waste material involves two considerations:

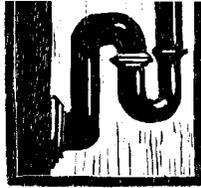


- **Will it harm humans?** Most wastes pose no unusual hazard; some wastes, however, are obviously dangerous—poisons, flammable materials, corrosive liquids, and explosives. There are also materials which are dangerous if put into an incinerator or open fire. In addition, metal cans with sharp edges or glass bottles that may break can be dangerous because of the risk that they may cut someone during disposal.
- **Will it harm the environment?** Some materials which don't pose immediate danger may cause long-term problems. If used motor oil, for example, is poured out in the back yard, it can filter down into the groundwater and build up concentrations dangerous to plants, animals and humans.

For the vast majority of household wastes—food, paper, household consumer products—the answer to both these questions is “No.” Besides household products packaged for consumer use, which are intended for disposal through normal waste disposal systems, there are other household materials (such as old pesticides, chemical and photo hobby materials, used motor oil, gasoline and ammunition) that may pose disposal problems. Some of these may have label directions about safe disposal. A later section of this brochure contains more information and disposal guidelines for many common household wastes. If you have questions about the safe disposal of such materials, call your local environmental or public health agency.



COMMUNITIES HANDLE WASTE DISPOSAL



Household consumer products that most of us use routinely around the home have been manufactured with normal waste disposal methods in mind, and can be safely disposed of through normal disposal systems. Understanding this requires an understanding of these technologies.

Liquid and Human Waste Disposal Systems

Liquid and human wastes are handled through plumbing connected to either a sewer system or a septic system. If your home is connected to the community's sewer system, wastes which go down the drain are channeled through underground pipes to sewage treatment plants, where they are treated before discharge into streams or lakes. Almost 30 percent of the households in this country are not connected to sewers, but have individual septic systems. A septic system carries wastes into a tank where solid materials settle to the bottom and are broken down by bacteria. The waste liquid is allowed to flow into pipes that disperse it gradually over a large area of soil, where it is further broken down by naturally occurring soil micro-organisms.

Both sewers and septic systems are designed to handle biodegradable wastes (those that can be broken down into safe compounds by living organisms) by using bacteria to treat them. These bacteria can be damaged or killed if too large a quantity of some substances is emptied into the system. In addition, some toxic materials may pass through the system unaffected by the bacteria. Call your local environmental agency, public health office, or the product manufacturer if you have questions about what your sewer or septic system can handle.

There are many household consumer products—for example, sink and tub cleaners, laundry detergents, dish and hand soap, drain cleaners—which go down the drain during normal use. These products have been designed for disposal through sewer or septic systems. While the best disposal method is to use the product up, leftover amounts diluted with plenty of water can be safely flushed down the drain.

Solid Waste Disposal Systems

Community trash collection systems are designed to handle solid waste—not only from households, but from business and commercial sources as well. In a modern society like ours, about half of all such waste is paper and paper products. The rest is made up of food and kitchen waste, household consumer products, and other materials.

For hundreds of years, until well into this century, most communities had dumps, where waste was left to decompose. Dumps were often sources of disease from insects and rodents, and offered no protection for air, land or water. Although we are now much more sensitive to environmental protection, many dumps, even those under closure orders, are forced to continue operating for lack of any other waste disposal facilities.

Most communities now dispose of household wastes through municipal landfills or incinerators. These incinerators are regulated by law to make sure that they do not release pollutants into the air.



A landfill is often sited on a layer of rock or clay which protects the ground below from rain and other liquids that filter down through the waste as it decomposes. The site is sometimes lined to prevent leakage. Research has shown that household products packaged for consumer use can be safely disposed of in properly designed and managed municipal landfills. The large amount of paper in these landfills acts to absorb rainwater and other liquids in which waste products may be dissolved. There is evidence that this allows biological breakdown by naturally occurring bacteria, and detoxification in certain cases.

DISPOSE OF HOUSEHOLD WASTES

Protecting human health and the environment through safe disposal is largely a matter of common sense. The basic principles are simple:

Household consumer products are designed for safe disposal through normal waste disposal systems.

- Read the product label. Substances which are poisonous, corrosive, or flammable, or packages that should not be incinerated or punctured, will be clearly labeled for consumer safety.
- The best disposal method for any product, household or otherwise, is to use it up or give it to someone who can. This is not only efficient disposal, but good use of our natural resources.
- Disposing of empty containers in the normal trash collection seldom poses a problem. On some products, the label will carry specific instructions about wrapping or rinsing the container, or not allowing the container to be punctured or incinerated. Glass bottles should be wrapped in newspaper to protect sanitation workers in case the bottles should break.
- If a product goes down the drain in the course of normal use, usually it can be disposed of down the drain. It is a good idea to dilute the product with plenty of water during disposal. Do not pour more than one product down the drain at a time, since some substances can react when mixed with incompatible materials. Again, make sure to check the product label before disposal.

There are some leftover household materials (for example, old pesticides, gasoline, used motor oil or ammunition) that can pose disposal problems.

- Don't pour any such materials out onto the ground or down storm drains. Also, don't bury empty or partially empty containers in the back yard, or throw them into roadside dumps.
- Never remove the label, or transfer materials into another container.
- If you aren't sure what's in a container, or you have questions about how to dispose of it, call your local health agency or environmental protection office.
- Hold any material which you think may pose a disposal problem for your community's special collection days.



Follow this list of DOs and DON'Ts when disposing of any leftover substances in the home.

DO buy the right amount of product for the job you have to do. Read the label carefully before you purchase. It is your responsibility to use and dispose of household products and materials safely.

DO use up any product that you buy—or if you can't, give it to someone who can. Make sure that any product you give away is in its original container with its label intact and any use and disposal instructions included. Give leftover paint to a local community or theater group; donate leftover pesticides to the local garden club; etc.

DO recycle wastes if you can. Take used or contaminated motor oil, transmission fluid, kerosene and diesel fuel to an automotive service center, oil recycling station, or authorized collection site; turn in your old car battery; etc.

DO wrap the container in newspaper before placing it in the trash if the label carries a warning about not getting the contents on your skin.

DO dispose of products that go down the drain during normal use by pouring them down the drain with plenty of water. Dispose of each product separately, small amounts at a time. This includes sink and drain cleaners, laundry products, soaps, etc.

DO empty all aerosol cans, by depressing the button until no more product comes out, before putting in the trash. Never throw empty aerosol containers into an incinerator or trash compactor.

DO follow all label directions.

DO call your local environmental or public health agency with questions about any material which you think may pose a disposal problem.

DO contact your community government to find out what kind of disposal systems (solid waste and sewage) your community has, and whether there are any materials which should not go through normal municipal disposal.



DON'T dispose of any materials by pouring them into your back yard or into a storm sewer.

DON'T bury any containers, empty or full, in your back yard.

DON'T attempt to use a back yard fireplace or barbecue as an incinerator.

DON'T dispose of anything in dumps by the side of the road.

DON'T remove product labels.

DON'T remove products from their original containers for storage or future use.

DON'T refill empty containers, even with the same material, unless the label recommends it. Once a container is empty, dispose of it. Follow label instructions about rinsing the container or wrapping it in newspaper.

DISPOSAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD CONSUMER PRODUCTS

Refer to the DISPOSAL DOs and DON'Ts section immediately preceding this list in following these recommended disposal instructions. **These instructions generally apply to small quantities of leftover or unused household products, and cover major product categories.** For further information or disposal recommendations for products not included on this list, contact:

The Household Products Disposal Council
1625 Eye Street, NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20006
(202) 659-5535

Indoor Household Products

Detergents (dishwashing, laundry)

Cleaners (glass, toilet bowl, bathroom, scouring, rug and upholstery, and all-purpose)

Liquids: Pour down drain with plenty of water and put empty container in trash.

Powders, solids: Place container, tightly closed where possible, in trash.

Drain Cleaners

Liquids: Pour down drain with plenty of water and put empty container in trash.

Crystals: Put tightly closed container in trash.

Oven Cleaners

Wrap tightly closed container and put in trash.

Furniture, Floor, and Metal Polishes

Wrap tightly closed container and put in trash.

Bleaches and Household Disinfectants

Follow any disposal instructions on label.* If there are none, pour well-diluted product down drain. (Septic tank users should not put large amounts of disinfectants down drain at one time.) Wrap container and put in trash.

Indoor Pesticides and Insect Repellents

Follow any disposal instructions on label.* If there are none, wrap container and put in trash.

Workshop and Outdoor Products

Pesticides and Wood Preservatives

Follow any disposal instructions on label.* If there are none, wrap container and put in trash.

Note: Contact local Cooperative Extension Service for advice before using any pesticide or wood preservative more than a few years old. Significant amounts of very old pesticides and wood preservatives may best be taken to a special household waste collection center.

Fertilizers

Dry: Wrap and put in trash.

Liquid: Pour quantities less than a gallon down drain with plenty of water.

Note: For products containing a pesticide, see Pesticides and Wood Preservatives.*

Swimming Pool Algaecides (chlorine-releasing)

Follow any disposal instructions on label.* If there are none, wrap container and put in trash.

Paints and Other Coatings

Latex-base: Wrap tightly closed container and put in trash.

Oil-base and wood stain: For small quantities and dried out products, wrap tightly closed container and put in trash. Significant amounts may best be taken to a special household waste collection center.

Note: For products containing wood preservatives, see Pesticides and Wood Preservatives.*

Paint Thinners and Strippers

For small quantities, wrap tightly closed container and put in trash. Significant amounts may best be taken to a special household waste collection center.

Automotive Products

Antifreezes and Windshield Washer Fluids

Pour down drain with plenty of water and put empty container in trash. Care should be taken not to put large quantities of antifreezes into septic systems at one time.

Note: Never pour antifreezes on ground; they are harmful if ingested by animals.

Brake Fluids and Car Waxes and Polishes

Wrap tightly closed container and put in trash.

Personal Care Products

Make-Up and Nail Polish

Put tightly closed container in trash.

Nail Polish Remover and Rubbing Alcohol

Pour down drain with plenty of water. Rinse empty container and put in trash.

Medicines

Flush down toilet and put empty container in trash.

*The federal government regulates the labeling of products making pesticidal and disinfectant claims.

**E CAN WORK
GETHER
PROTECT
OUR HEALTH
AND OUR
ENVIRONMENT**

Research has shown that most household products packaged for consumer use can be safely disposed of through normal waste disposal systems. People buy household products because they need them, and usually they use the products up before discarding.

Those materials which may pose disposal problems make up a very small percentage of household waste. A study carried out in two sanitation districts in Los Angeles found only 2.7 pounds of such materials per 2,000 pounds of garbage. Most of this was used motor oil, gasoline and solvents such as paint thinners—materials which would be more appropriately held for special collection days or taken to special recycling centers.

There are communities whose existing landfills do not meet the most current environmental standards established by federal law. Bringing disposal facilities and waste water treatment plants up to modern standards should be a priority in every community.

For communities concerned about safe disposal of household wastes, the establishment of voluntary community collection days that follow the requirements under federal law is a workable solution. Concerned citizens should work toward the establishment of modern, effective waste disposal and treatment facilities which protect human health and the environment.



SET UP A SPECIAL COLLECTION DAY

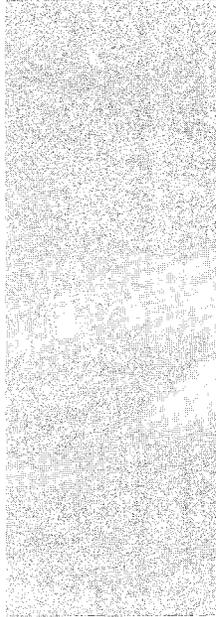
For those household materials which do require special handling—such as used oil, gasoline, hobby materials, old pesticides that contain DDT or similar types of substances—voluntary community collection days can be an effective disposal solution. These require a commitment from a sponsoring organization (local government, a community organization, a local industry, or a Hazardous Waste Task Force of local volunteers) to handle the event.



If your community is interested in setting up a special collection day, a good place to start is to contact your state's agency responsible for hazardous waste. Besides knowing the rules and regulations, the agency may have other essential information, such as sources of state matching funds or the names of companies licensed to handle such wastes.

The process of holding a special collection day should begin at least six months before the date you've selected. You will need to plan for:

- Raising the funds for the project
- Selecting an appropriate site—large enough, convenient to the population—and getting permission to use it
- Arranging for technical experts who can identify wastes as they are brought in



- Consulting with the proper authorities or a legal advisor on liability issues
- Publicizing the collection day
- Overseeing the delivery of materials brought in by consumers
- Hiring a federally licensed disposal company to take the collected materials to a licensed hazardous waste disposal facility (a site set aside and strictly regulated for the long-term disposal of any materials which pose a hazard to human health or the environment. Only solids are accepted for storage; liquid wastes must be solidified by evaporation or absorption in solid material like sawdust or clay pellets).

It will help save your organization time and effort if your publicity materials stress that you are collecting only hazardous or possibly hazardous household materials—not household consumer products, bulky garden or lawn trash, used furniture, etc.

It's also important that your notice include the information that materials being stored around the home for a collection day should be kept in a safe place. Tell consumers to set aside waste materials in the garage or basement, on shelves out of the reach of children, or locked in a cabinet.

AWARENESS IS THE KEY TO SAFE DISPOSAL



Household consumer products have been designed, manufactured and tested under strict federal laws covering contents, safety, and labeling. They are intended for disposal through normal waste collection systems.

One way to protect the environment from household wastes is to identify those wastes which do need special handling, and set up mechanisms to make sure they are properly disposed of. Special collection days, provided that they have community support and qualified people to identify and handle the wastes, are a good solution.

The best protection for our environment is an aware and informed consumer. If you have questions about the proper disposal of any household wastes, contact your local environmental or public health agency. Further information is also available from:

The Household Products Disposal Council
1625 Eye Street, N.W.
Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20006
202-659-5535



DISPOSAL
DO IT RIGHT

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