

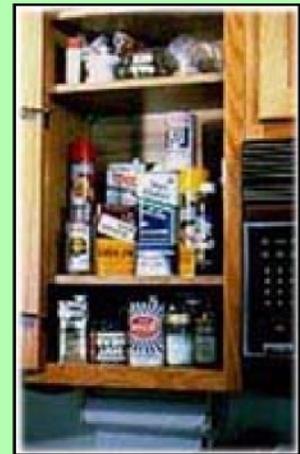
# Household Hazardous Waste made **SAFE!**

Household hazardous **wastes** are produced when household hazardous *materials* are no longer wanted or needed as household products. These wastes include unused paint thinners (flammable), oven cleaners (caustics), or bleach (oxidizers). They can harm our health and contaminate the soil, ground water, and surface waters. To make informed decisions when buying and using products with hazardous ingredients, it is important to identify which products in the home may be harmful to you, your family, and the environment.

## What are Household Hazardous Materials?

We use hazardous products every day in our homes. These products become a hazard when through improper use or disposal they cause a threat to human health or the environment. Many common household products, such as paints, solvents, drain openers, oven cleaners, polishes, waxes, pesticides, cleaning agents, and spent automotive products, have hazardous properties, such as:

<b>FLAMMABLE:</b>	Easily set on fire or ignited
<b>CORROSIVE / CAUSTIC:</b>	Burns or destroys living tissue on contact
<b>EXPLOSIVE / REACTIVE:</b>	Detonates or explodes by exposure to heat, sudden shock, or pressure
<b>TOXIC / POISONOUS:</b>	Capable of causing injury or death through ingestion, inhalation, or absorption through skin



## How to Identify Household Hazardous Products?

To help identify hazardous products, federal law requires them to be labeled with warnings about their use, storage, and disposal. These labels include signal words to help quickly identify hazardous products, such as:

**"Danger"** (most toxic), **"Warning,"** and **"Caution"** (least toxic).

These signal words, along with the properties that make the product hazardous, are listed to help you use these products safely. However, these requirements do not apply to most hobby products and typically do not inform you of long term health hazards. But, when provided, these labels offer valuable information that can help you to make informed choices about what products to buy and how to dispose of them if they become a waste.

## Why Should You be Concerned?

The average household throws 15.5 pounds of hazardous materials into the trash each year. Household hazardous materials are disposed of in other ways, too. Certain products, such as used oil, are unlawfully poured down storm drains and many products end up going down the sink drain to septic systems or sewers.

Flammable or reactive household chemicals can release toxic fumes or even explode if they are mixed together in the trash, causing fires or refuse collection injuring workers. Dumping solvents into septic systems or landfills may contaminate ground and surface waters, ruining drinking water and killing fish and wildlife. Used motor oil poured into storm drains can flow directly into our streams and ponds.

There are also certain health threats associated with some of these products. Products like lye can burn skin, eyes, or respiratory passages. Exposure to some pesticides, paints, and solvents can cause weakness, confusion, dizziness, irritability, headaches, nausea, sweating, tremors, and even convulsions. Other repeated chemical exposures can cause cancer or birth defects.

Children and pets are especially vulnerable to these products and accidental poisonings can occur if these products are not properly stored. Remember, personal care products and cleaning substances are among the leading causes of poisoning! These substances should be stored safely and, if no longer used, disposed of properly.

## What Should You Do?

To protect your family and the environment, follow these three simple steps:

### 1. Buy Products Wisely

- ◆ Read the label and buy non-toxic alternatives or less toxic products.
- ◆ Buy only what you need for the job to avoid leftover product.

### 2. When you do buy hazardous products, store them safely

- ◆ Close lids tightly so products will not dry out, evaporate, or leak.
- ◆ Store products in a cool, dry area away from sources of heat, spark, or flame.
- ◆ Store products in original container with label intact.
- ◆ Store flammables, corrosives, and poisons on separate shelves.

### 3. Use Products Safely

- ◆ Read the label carefully before use and follow directions.
- ◆ Use only the recommended amount.
- ◆ **Never mix products!**
- ◆ Use products in well ventilated rooms and avoid breathing fumes.



**Help protect our waterways!**

## What About the Waste?

Every effort should be made to minimize the waste. If you are not able to use up the entire product, you might share what you cannot use with a friend. If this is not an option, don't pour the waste down the drain or discard it in the trash. These activities are harmful and may violate federal, state, or local regulations. You should store these wastes safely and bring them to the town's annual household hazardous waste collection.



**Help keep the environment safe!**

## Merrimac's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Collection

To prevent potential problems, a HHW collection event is held Merrimac each fall (usually November). By safely storing your hazardous wastes, and bringing them to the Georgetown HHW collection site, you are making sure your wastes are transported and disposed of by licensed contractors in a manner which prevents environmental pollution.

For information on Georgetown's next HHW collection day, contact the Board of Health office at 978-346-4066 or [merrimacboh@adelphia.net](mailto:merrimacboh@adelphia.net)

Proper management of household hazardous products during use, storage, and disposal should be everyone's concern. Your actions to reduce the use of these products wherever possible, to reduce the amount of waste generated, and to properly dispose of all household hazardous wastes will help safeguard your family's health and the environment.

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