



INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Household Hazardous Waste

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www.idem.IN.gov

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Description:

- Why should I be concerned?
- Look in your garage, your basement or under your kitchen sink. Many products found in households may pose a threat to your family's health and/or the environment.
- These products can also contaminate ground and surface water if improperly handled. Harmful products include drain cleaners, oven cleaners, art supplies, oil-based paint, paint remover, solvents, motor oil, antifreeze and pesticides.

Environmental Impact:

- What makes a substance hazardous?
- A substance is considered hazardous if it is flammable, corrosive, toxic or can explode.
- What can happen if improperly disposed?
 - If hazardous substances are poured into a sewer or septic system they can disrupt the function of the treatment plant or septic system or travel directly into our streams, lakes and waterways.
 - A substance if disposed of in the trash, could harm waste handlers or be spilled. When they reach a landfill, they can contaminate ground water.
 - In a residential fire, stored chemicals could cause explosions or release toxic fumes that could injure occupants and firefighters.
 - Accidental ingestion of a hazardous substance could lead to poisoning of children or animals. Antifreeze tastes sweet to children and animals but is toxic.
- Household hazardous waste products from one home may seem insignificant, but when multiplied by millions of homes across Indiana that use similar products and disposed of improperly, the combined effect becomes a serious problem.
- What are some examples of common household products and the specific hazardous substances they contain?
 - Oven cleaners contain lye, naphtha, petroleum distillates and methylene chloride. These ingredients can cause respiratory distress, or burn the skin, and can affect the liver and kidneys. Some of these chemicals can accumulate in sediments, plants and animals.
 - Paint thinners contain toluene, acetone, naphthalene, and other ingredients. These can cause dizziness, eye and throat irritation, and lung and kidney damage. These chemicals accumulate in the environment and harm aquatic life.
 - Toilet bowl cleaners contain sodium hydroxide, chlorinated phenols and complex phosphates. These chemicals are toxic and corrosive. Long-term exposure causes headaches, and liver and kidney damage. Some of these chemicals build up in the fatty tissue of wildlife and humans. Toilet bowl cleaning products with blue dye may contain chromium, which is toxic.

IDEM's Role:

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.
- IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance helps Indiana communities and county governments develop household hazardous waste collection programs.

Citizen's Role:

- What can you do as a citizen to properly manage and dispose of household hazardous waste?
 - Generate less waste and buy only what you can use.
 - Reuse or donate unused products to friends or community organizations.
 - Avoid using chemical pesticides by using traps or other Integrated Pest Management methods for pest control.

- Select the least hazardous product to do the job and buy the minimum amounts necessary.
- Remember to always store and dispose of products in their original containers because the label contains important information such as manufacturer's name and phone number to contact in an emergency.
- Contact your city's or county's environmental health, solid waste management or public works department for information on proper disposal and for which wastes can be recycled in your area.
- Look at the labels of the products in your home.
 - Ingredients such as lye, petroleum distillates, phenols, and trichlorobenzene indicate that the products may pose a threat to your health and/or the environment.
 - Did you know products with hazardous ingredients must bear a label showing the toxicity of the product?
- Warning labels on containers can give you information on the potential threats posed by the contents. The levels of hazard are indicated by the terms:
 - **DANGER-POISON** (substances that are extremely flammable, toxic, or corrosive),
 - **WARNING** (moderately toxic substances), and
 - **CAUTION** (slightly toxic substances).

More Information:

- For more information on household hazardous waste, visit IDEM's website at <http://www.Recycle.IN.gov>.
- For questions and concerns about household hazardous waste, please call IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance at (800) 988-7901.