

Household Hazardous Wastes (HHW) Fact Sheet



Many people unknowingly or carelessly throw away items from their home that can cause major problems to the environment. If household hazardous waste (HHW) is disposed of improperly, it can start a fire, give off dangerous fumes, contaminate the soil or groundwater, or cause injury to people or animals. There are numerous HHWs that contain highly toxic heavy metals (arsenic, barium, cadmium, chromium, lead, mercury, selenium or silver), dioxins and other carcinogens. Improper disposal can result in entry into the food chain and waterways posing threat to humans, wildlife and our environment.

The public awareness and educational components of HHW collection programs are invaluable as they promote pollution prevention and safety and serve to improve water quality in our community.

- ✓ Buy only what you need and use what you buy or give it to someone who can use it.
- ✓ Follow the manufacturer's directions – more is not always better.
- ✓ Tips to properly store hazardous products in order to increase their shelf life (place paper bags of ant poison or moth balls on the garage shelf in air tight plastic bags).
- ✓ Switch to less hazardous alternative products or use homemade substitutes.
- ✓ Consider common sense and natural pest control solutions without chemicals.
- ✓ Common sense suggestions to store chemicals properly in order to keep children and pets safe.
- ✓ Be aware that household chemicals, when commingled, can produce poisonous vapors (bleach and toilet bowl cleaner, when mixed will produce deadly chlorine gas), generate enough heat to cause burns (a cola beverage spilled on pool chlorine), or spontaneously ignite (motor oil coming in contact with pool chlorine).
- ✓ Don't reuse an empty household cleaning product container, clearly label cleaning mixtures and don't store such mixtures in old food containers.
- ✓ Don't pour HHW on the ground, down the storm drains, driveways or into the street.
- ✓ Don't burn your HHW, as carcinogens can be released and heavy metals can be vaporized and carried in the air before settling out.



- ✓ Many household products are dangerous – read the labels. For example, in order of

increased toxicity, pesticides are labeled *caution, warning, or danger/poison*.

Highest hazard	DANGER, POISON		
Less hazardous	CAUTION, WARNING		
Safer	You don't see: DANGER, POISON CAUTION or WARNING		

The following products represent Household products that should be managed as hazardous wastes and disposed of properly.

- **Pesticides, insecticides, fungicides and animal care products** – There are lots of banned and restricted pesticides residing in sheds, garages and under kitchen sinks. They can be highly toxic.
- **Herbicides and wood preservatives** – They can contain dioxins and are toxic.
- **Fluorescent lamps (bulbs) and other mercury containing devices** –Including switches, thermometers, thermostats and ballasts, which may also contain PCBs.
- **Rechargeable and button batteries** – May contain nickel, cadmium, mercury or lithium.
- **Chemistry set and photographic hobby chemicals** – Chemicals may be unstable and photo developers & fixers are corrosive.
- **Pool chemicals and ammonium nitrate fertilizers** – Contain oxidizers that can cause an unstable reaction or explosion if mixed with other combustible substances.
- **Paints containing lead, mercury-based fungicides, and paint products such as strippers, rust paints, stains & finishes** – These may be flammable and toxic and may contain methylene chloride, toluene, petroleum distillates, methyl ethyl ketone, xylene, chlorinated phenols and halogenated hydrocarbons.
- **Corrosives and caustics** – Such substances as battery acid, muriatic acid, rust remover, drain cleaner and quick lime can cause severe skin damage and blindness.
- **Flammables** – Oil based paints, mineral spirits, solvents, aerosols, fuel and automotive fluids.
- **Any very old products** – Some of these wastes have been stored for up to 50 years and contain banned or restricted chemicals. Examples are lead arsenate, cyanide, strychnine and DDT.

For more information or service needs contact the City of Pensacola's [Sanitation Department](#) or [NPDES Stormwater Program](#).