

Identifying Household Hazardous Waste

Many of the products we use in our homes today would be classified as hazardous waste if they were being used in an industrial setting! We often don't realize that these products need to be used, stored, and disposed of in ways that are specific to hazardous chemicals. If you have hazardous products in your home, it is important that you are aware of what the dangers are and how to take appropriate measures to protect yourself.

What is Household Hazardous Waste?

Household waste is any solid waste discarded from a home, and can be classified as either non-hazardous or hazardous. Hazardous wastes, specifically, are any chemical waste compound that has one or more of the following characteristics:

- Ignitable - catches fire under certain conditions,
- Corrosive - damages human tissue,
- Reactive - capable of causing an explosion, and/or
- Toxic - causes injury or death if swallowed, absorbed through skin, or inhaled.

Any product used in the home that has any of these characteristics, and is discarded prior to complete use, falls into the category of *household hazardous waste*. Everyday use products that contain hazardous chemicals include:

- drain cleaners
- ammonia- or bleach-containing cleaners or disinfectants
- pesticides and herbicides
- paints, stains, varnishes, thinners, and lacquers
- automotive products such as gasoline, oil, and anti-freeze

These items are also considered hazardous waste:

- batteries, including car batteries
- televisions
- computer monitors
- fluorescent lights, including CFLs

Though this is not an exhaustive list, all of these products have the potential to be a hazard during usage or via their inclusion as part of a waste stream. As a result, special attention must be paid to their storage, handling, and disposal.

If something is hazardous, the label will contain one of these signal words:

- Caution
- Danger
- Poison
- Warning
- Corrosive
- Flammable
- Explosive
- Oxidizer
- Irritant
- Environmental Hazard

If the label contains one or more of these words, it is hazardous waste. Do not throw hazardous waste in with your trash or recycling! It will be accepted at household hazardous waste collection days, which take place regularly in or around your community.

Additional Information

For more information regarding household hazardous waste, please contact hhw@des.nh.gov, call (603) 271-2047, or go to <http://des.nh.gov/>.