

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

EPA considers some leftover household products that can catch fire, react, or explode under certain circumstances, or that are corrosive or toxic as household hazardous waste. Products, such as paints, cleaners, oils, batteries, and pesticides can contain hazardous ingredients and require special care when you dispose of them.

Safe Management of HHW

To avoid the potential risks associated with household hazardous wastes, it is important that people always monitor the use, storage, and disposal of products with potentially hazardous substances in their homes. Improper disposal of HHW can include pouring them down the drain, on the ground, into storm sewers, or in some cases putting them out with the regular trash.

The dangers of such disposal methods might not be immediately obvious, but improper disposal of these wastes can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health. Certain types of HHW have the potential to cause physical injury to sanitation workers, contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets. They can also present hazards to children and pets if left around the house.

Some quick tips for the safe handling of household hazardous wastes include:

- Follow any instructions for use and storage provided on product labels carefully to prevent any accidents at home.
- Be sure to read product labels for disposal directions to reduce the risk of products exploding, igniting, leaking, mixing with other chemicals, or posing other hazards on the way to a disposal facility.
- Never store hazardous products in food containers; keep them in their original containers and never remove labels. Corroding containers, however, require special handling. Call your local hazardous materials official or fire department for instructions.
- When leftovers remain, never mix HHW with other products. Incompatible products might react, ignite, or explode, and contaminated HHW might become unrecyclable.

- Check with your local environmental, health or solid waste agency for more information on HHW management options in your area.
 - If your community doesn't have a year-round collection system for HHW, see if there are any designated days in your area for collecting HHW at a central location to ensure safe management and disposal.
 - If your community has neither a permanent collection site nor a special collection day, you might be able to drop off certain products at local businesses for recycling or proper disposal. Some local garages, for example, may accept used motor oil for recycling. Check around.
- Remember, even empty containers of HHW can pose hazards because of the residual chemicals that might remain so handle them with care also.

Reducing HHW in Your Home

Consider reducing your purchase of products that contain hazardous ingredients. Learn about the use of alternative methods or products—without hazardous ingredients—for some common household needs. When shopping for items such as multipurpose household cleaners, toilet cleaners, laundry detergent, dish soap, dishwashing machine pods and gels, bug sprays and insect pest control, consider shopping for environmentally friendly, natural products or search online for simple recipes you can use to create your own.

Below are some ideas to get you started. Additional information is available from [EPA's Safer Choice program](#).

Hazardous Waste Source Reduction around the Home	
Drain Cleaner	Use a plunger or plumber's snake.
Glass Cleaner	Mix one tablespoon of vinegar or lemon juice in one quart of water. Spray on and use newspaper to dry.

Hazardous Waste Source Reduction around the Home	
Furniture Polish	Mix one teaspoon of lemon juice in one pint of mineral or vegetable oil and wipe furniture.
Rug Deodorizer	Liberally sprinkle carpets with baking soda. Wait at least 15 minutes and vacuum. Repeat if necessary.
Silver Polish	Boil two to three inches of water in a shallow pan with one teaspoon of salt, one teaspoon of baking soda and a sheet of aluminum foil. Totally submerge silver and boil for two to three more minutes. Wipe away tarnish and repeat if necessary.
Mothballs	Use cedar chips, lavender flowers, rosemary, mints or white peppercorns.

Regulating HHW

Additional Information for State and Community Programs

- [Household Hazardous Waste Management: A Manual for One-Day Collection Programs](#)

While most hazardous wastes that are ignitable, reactive, corrosive or toxic in America are regulated in America under Subtitle C of the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA), Congress developed an exclusion for household waste. Under this exclusion, found in [Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations Part 261.4](#), wastes generated by normal household activities (e.g., routine house and yard maintenance) are excluded from the definition of hazardous waste. Specifically, wastes covered by the household hazardous waste exclusion must satisfy two criteria:

1. The waste must be generated by individuals on the premise of a temporary or permanent residence, and
2. The waste stream must be composed primarily of materials found in wastes generated by consumers in their homes.

EPA interprets this exclusion to include household-like areas, such as bunkhouses, ranger stations, crew quarters, campgrounds, picnic grounds, and day-use recreation areas.

Although household hazardous waste is excluded from Subtitle C of RCRA, it is regulated under Subtitle D of this law as a solid waste. In other words, household hazardous waste is regulated on the state and local level.

Georgia Environmental Protection Division

A Division of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources

How To Deal With Household Hazardous Waste In Georgia

Maybe you've recently bought a house, or a loved one has passed away and you're cleaning out his or her house. In the garage, crawlspace, or outbuilding you find a dusty shelf loaded with rusty old cans of paint, solvents, spray insecticides, liquid fertilizers, gasoline, and more.

Dumping them down the drain will pollute the groundwater and putting them in the trash may not be allowed, so what exactly are you supposed to do with them? The often frustrating reality is that in Georgia at this time, reuse and recycling options for household hazardous waste (HHW) are extremely limited.

If you owned a business that generated this type of waste, you would be required to track its generation and disposal, and pay very high disposal costs to have the material safely removed and either recycled (most likely blended into fuels for industrial furnaces and boilers) or disposed of in a hazardous waste landfill. However, state and federal laws provide an exemption for individuals. You can legally throw these items in the garbage (but only solids, because garbage trucks are not allowed to pick up liquid waste).

Some companies collect small amounts but charge high fees for the service, which typically involves sending a truck and chemist to collect the material. This option is recommended for small businesses, as part of the service includes providing documentation that the materials have been properly handled. Companies that provide this service include:

- Clean Harbors Environmental Services, Tucker, GA, 770-934-0902
- Safety-Kleen, Norcross, GA, 770-662-5151
- MKC Enterprises, Doraville, GA, 770-457-1341

Atlanta Paint Disposal accepts latex paint for a fee. Visit their website at www.atlantapaintdisposal.com for details. Another HHW option for residents in metro Atlanta is CHaRM, the Center for Hard to Recycle Materials. Visit their website at livethrive.org/charm to find a list of items they accept and any applicable fees. To search for more options for your HHW, visit www.earth911.org. You can also email your questions to recycle@dca.ga.gov.

Managing HHW Yourself

The processes described below involve either solidifying wastes for disposal via regular garbage service or using evaporation to "dispose" of the material. When using either method, be sure to work outside and wear rubber gloves and eye protection. Also, never mix more than one material when you're preparing the items for disposal.

Solidification. The idea here is to make the liquids solid so they may be disposed of with your regular household garbage. Sawdust or shredded newspaper will work, but for larger quantities, you'll want to get cat litter, cheaper at auto parts stores; ask for oil dry. Double-line a garbage can with plastic garbage bags, add some of the oil dry and then some of the liquid waste. (Don't add oil dry to the liquid, as it may splash.) Work outside, away from access by children or animals. When the material has solidified, tie up the bag and place it in with your regular trash. Be sure the bag will not be so heavy that you can't handle it, or that it ruptures. Wear gloves and safety glasses to prevent contact with the materials you're handling.

Evaporation. This method works best for thin, flammable liquids, including gasoline and paint thinner. Again, work outside, away from access by children and animals. If there is only a trace amount of liquid in the container, simply open the top and let it evaporate. For any larger amounts, you'll want to accelerate the process. Use a disposable metal tray (an aluminum foil roasting pan is ideal) and pour a half-inch of liquid into the tray. The larger surface area will allow the liquid to evaporate much more quickly. Repeat this process until the liquid is gone and then recycle or reuse the containers, if possible.

The foil tray can be recycled with scrap aluminum in some collection programs. If you're leery of having the fuel-coated foil around your house until you can recycle it, then crush the tray, wrap it in a few layers of newspaper and put it in a sturdy plastic garbage bag. Then it can be disposed of with your regular household garbage.

Tips for avoiding this problem in the future include (1) trying to determine how much material (paint, insecticide, etc.) the job will actually require and not purchasing more than you'll need and (2) exploring less-toxic alternatives.

Please note that EPD neither endorses, nor recommends, the services of any specific company.