

Safe Use and Disposal of Household Chemicals

Cooperative Extension Service
College of Agriculture and
Home Economics



Guide G-312

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Household chemical products must be used according to directions and they must also be disposed of safely. Safe disposal of household chemicals means that they are disposed of in a way that will not:

- harm people.
- harm the environment.

Most household wastes are safe, can be disposed of safely and most are intended to go down the drain in normal use. The best way to dispose of most household chemical products is to use as much of the product as possible. If some remains, dilute with water and flush down the drain. Household chemical products should NOT be mixed, so do not put more than one product down the drain at a time.

Hazardous waste products include acids, paints, poisons and solvents. Buy only what you need and use and reuse as much as possible. Allow liquid wastes to dry out whenever possible. Leave paint can lids open to dry leftover paint, then put the cans in the trash.

NEVER dispose of hazardous wastes down the sink drain or into the sewer system. Do not burn or dump any hazardous wastes on the ground, as waste that is dumped on the ground or into a drain eventually flows to surface and ground water sources where it can pollute drinking water. Burning some waste products can release toxic fumes or gases into the air.

Follow these suggested guidelines for disposing of products safely:

1. **Acids and caustic products.** Acids and caustics are found in some cleaning products like drain openers. Use these materials completely according to label directions. These products are usable even when a few years old.
2. **Aerosols.** Empty aerosol containers completely before disposing with other trash to prevent an explosion hazard.
3. **Antifreeze.** Store out of reach of animals and children, as they are attracted to the sweet taste of antifreeze. Don't pour used antifreeze on the ground—dilute it thoroughly with water and pour down the drain.
4. **Bleach.** Try to use up all the product. NEVER mix chlorine bleach with ammonia or acidic products such as drain, toilet bowl, or metal cleaners, as toxic fumes (strong enough to be fatal) will result.
5. **Cleaners and polishes.** Cleaners and polishes (rug, floor, and oven cleaners and furniture polish) should be used completely whenever possible. Seal empty containers and dispose of them with the rest of your garbage.
6. **Disinfectants.** Use the products completely according to label instructions and with caution.
7. **Gasoline.** Avoid buying more than you can use at one time. Use completely by mixing old gasoline with fresh gasoline. Store in an approved container in a cool, dry place.
8. **Insecticides.** Use insecticides completely according to label directions. If you can't use the material, save to dispose of on a hazardous collection day in your community. NEVER reuse the containers. Dispose of excess according to label directions.
9. **Paint.** if possible use the product completely or mix with other paints to use. Allow any remaining paint to dry out and harden. Once the paint is solid, put it in the trash.
10. **Solvent.** Clean used solvents (paint thinner, turpentine, varnish) by allowing the paint or direct particles to settle out in a container. Drain off the clear liquid for re-use. Do not dump remaining material onto soil or down sewers, drains or the toilet.

The chart on the back of this page lists important Do's and Don'ts to follow when using selected household chemicals. Take time to read it and display it in a prominent area in your home. Be sure to fill in the telephone numbers of your doctor and fire department.

Dos and Don'ts for Using Chemical Household Products Safely

Dos	Don'ts
<p>To be sure it will meet your needs, always read labels before you buy a product.</p> <p>Buy only what you need, and whenever possible reduce the number of products you buy. Many times a general purpose household cleaner can be used instead of cleaners designed for a specific purpose.</p> <p>Read and follow directions carefully. Always use products in the recommended concentration.</p> <p>Know which products are toxic and store accordingly.</p> <p>Teach children the dangers of poison.</p> <p>Keep hazardous substances out of the reach of children and pets. Use child-resistant caps. Replace child-resistant caps securely after using product.</p> <p>After their expiration date discard medicines by flushing them down the toilet. Or, collect expired medicines and return them to a local pharmacy for disposal.</p> <p>Empty all aerosol cans by depressing the button until no more product comes out.</p> <p>Wrap containers in newspaper before placing them in the trash if the label contains a warning about not getting the contents on your skin.</p> <p>Contact the product manufacturer if you have any questions regarding the proper use, storage, or disposal of the product.</p>	<p>Don't remove product labels.</p> <p>Don't remove products from their original containers for storage or future use.</p> <p>Don't mix household chemicals or wastes together.</p> <p>Don't store household chemicals within the reach of children.</p> <p>Don't store household chemicals on shelves normally used for foods.</p> <p>Don't store hazardous substances in containers that are generally recognized as food containers.</p> <p>Don't store hazardous substances in the medicine cabinet.</p> <p>Don't dispose of hazardous substances by pouring onto the ground or down the storm sewer.</p> <p>Don't store incompatible products together. Flammables should never be stored with corrosives. Poisons should always be kept separate.</p> <p>Don't bury containers of leftover hazardous substances.</p> <p>Don't burn plastics, paint, insulation, or other potentially hazardous materials that might produce toxic fumes.</p> <p>Don't dump hazardous wastes by the side of the road.</p>

Phone Numbers for Emergencies:	
National Poison Control 1-800-222-1222	Fire Department _____
New Mexico Poison Control 1-800-432-6866	
Doctor _____	Emergency 911 _____

Originally written by Susan Wright, Extension Consumer Education Specialist

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