



HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is HHW

A. Household hazardous waste is considered to be any leftover or unused portions of materials that you use to clean and maintain your home. They are items such as (but not limited) to oil based paint, paint thinner, pesticides, fertilizers, household cleaners, antifreeze and other car fluids. These materials are frequently labeled with warnings like:

- Caution
- Warning
- Danger
- Poison
- Toxic
- Flammable
- Corrosive

For safety and environmental reasons it is illegal to dispose of HHW in the garbage, sewers or storm drains.

Q. Why is it important to properly dispose of HHW?

A. Household hazardous waste can pass through treatment processes or storm drains and get discharged into creeks, rivers, the Delta or the Bay. This can happen because wastewater treatment plants are not made to remove hazardous chemicals from wastewater, and storm drains flow directly to the Bay without any treatment at all.

Also, HHW thrown into the garbage can injure workers during collection or mix with other chemicals when put into landfills. Groundwater used for drinking or irrigation can be contaminated when hazardous materials are poured onto or seep into the ground. Household hazardous waste is sometimes disposed of improperly by pouring it down the drain in their home, on the ground, into storm drains or putting it out with the trash. The problem with disposing of it this way may have the potential to cause:

- Contamination of our waterways and drinking water
- Physical injury to sanitation workers
- Contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets
- Present hazards to children and pets if left around the house
- Harm wildlife and the environment

According to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste per year. The average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of household hazardous waste in the basement,

garage or in storage closets. When improperly disposed of, household hazardous waste can create a potential risk to people and the environment.

Q. How do I properly store my HHW?

A. Use and store products containing hazardous substances carefully to prevent any accidents at home.

- Never store hazardous products in food containers
- Keep products containing hazardous materials in their original containers and never remove the labels
- Corroding containers, however, should be repackaged and clearly labeled. This will prevent accidental ingestion and also can help protect sanitation workers
- When leftovers remain, never mix household hazardous waste with other products. Incompatibilities may react, ignite, or explode; contaminated household hazardous waste may become unrecyclable.

Q. Where can I take my HHW?

A.

Central Costa County residents:
Central Contra Costa Sanitary District (Central San)
1-800-646-1431
www.centralsan.org/services/hhwcf.html

East Contra Costa residents:
Delta Diablo Sanitation District
1-925-756-1900
www.ddsd.org

West Contra Costa residents:
West Contra Costa Integrated Waste Management Authority
1-888-412-9277
www.recyclenore.com/article.asp?key=3

Q. How can I produce less hazardous waste?

A. Try these tips for a less-toxic household:

- Buy only the amount of paint and cleaners you need
- Use up materials for the purpose they were intended
- Buy latex paint instead of oil based paint. It is easier to cleanup and easier to recycle
- Buy non-toxic or the least toxic product that will do the job
- Read the label! Following the instructions and use the amounts recommended
- Avoid products that are marked "dangerous" since they are usually the most toxic
- Make your own less-toxic household products!

Q. How do I prepare my HHW to deliver to a collection facility?

- A. Be sure to check with your collection facility for what materials they accept.
- Label all materials to the best of your ability. Do not mix materials.
 - Make sure all lids are on tightly. If a container is leaking or dirty, place it in a sturdy plastic bag and label the bag.
 - Pack containers in a sturdy box or tub with newspaper or other absorbent materials and transport in the trunk or rear of your vehicle.
 - Asbestos must be bagged in 6 ml. Plastic bags (4 heavy garbage bags) and cannot weigh more than 30 pounds per bag. Pieces can be no longer or wider than 27 inches.
 - Do not leave hazardous materials sitting in the sun or store them overnight in your car.
 - State law prohibits the transportation of more than 15 gallons or 125 pounds of hazardous waste in your vehicle. Individual containers are limited to 5-gallon capacity.
 - When you arrive, stay in your vehicle and a certified employee will unload your car for you.