

The 'How-to' on Managing Household Hazardous Wastes *Reducing pollution through management of household hazardous wastes*

Goddard Space Flight Center (GSFC) is subject to various permit requirements to include the implementation of best management practices to help manage the use and storage of hazardous materials and other processes in order to protect the environment and prevent pollution in our waterways. The same best management practices used by GSFC can be easily implemented in and around individual homes to lessen the risk of stormwater pollution by household hazardous wastes (HHW).

How hazardous are our households?

HHW are common, everyday products we use in our homes which present a threat or unreasonable risk to people and/or the environment. These items can be corrosive, ignitable, toxic, or reactive, and when no longer needed, they become hazardous waste that must be disposed of properly. HHW that is disposed of improperly or placed in trash receptacles can leak or be exposed to precipitation affording stormwater the opportunity to carry them into streams, rivers, wetlands, and ultimately the Chesapeake Bay. This introduction of HHW into waterways through runoff poses a threat to the health of the Bay and to the aquatic life that call it home. Follow these tips to properly identify, purchase, and dispose of HHW and prevent stormwater pollution:



- Look out for the hazardous 'buzz' words. Any material that is marked with the words, "danger," "caution," "warning," or "toxic" may contain chemicals that are detrimental to the environment. Read the constituent label and purchase nontoxic, biodegradable, recycled, and recyclable products for use whenever possible. Purchase only as much as you need in order to prevent the need for storage of excess materials.
- Never place toxic materials in your trash or pour them down sinks, storm drains, sanitary sewers, or on the ground; this is an illegal practice.
- Check with your municipality and/or county for HHW drop-off locations and times.

Improve Pollution Prevention During Home Improvement!

- Before beginning an outdoor project, locate the nearest storm drains and protect them from debris and other materials.



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- Clean up spills immediately and dispose of the waste properly. If you are unsure how to safely dispose of a substance, contact your local municipality or county facility.
- Store hazardous substances in such a way as to prevent leaks and spills.
- Purchase water-based paints (look for “latex” or “clean-up with water”). Clean paint brushes in a sink, not outdoors. Reuse paint thinner when using oil-based paints. Properly dispose of excess paints through a HHW collection program or donate unused paint to local organizations. Unused latex paint can be disposed of in the trash once it has been dried out by leaving it open to air, or mixing it with a clay-based cat litter or paint hardener.
- Sweep up and properly dispose of construction debris, such as concrete and mortar. Keep in mind that most construction and demolition waste is actually recyclable!
- If soil is disturbed during a project, be sure to remove excess sediment from roads/sidewalks/driveways and re-seed any bare areas with grass or native plants to prevent sediment run-off to storm drains.

Trash toxics and go natural!

Using environmentally-friendly soaps, cleaners, and detergents will reduce the quantity of HHW in your household. Using phosphate-free, biodegradable, and plant-based or citrus-based detergents are safer and more environmentally sound choices. Below are some specific cleaning suggestions for common household cleaning tasks:



- Use vinegar, water, and baking soda as a cleanser to reduce odor and indoor air pollutants simultaneously;
- Scour pots and pans with baking soda, salt, and/or borax;
- Clean the toilet bowl with flat cola, borax, and/or baking soda;
- Use a plunger or plumber’s snake to unclog drains; and,
- Switch to low-or no-phosphate detergents.

Through the practice of simple and healthy household habits, homeowners can keep common HHW out of the Bay!

Visit the following websites for more information on proper disposal of HHW and lessening your contribution to stormwater pollution:

<https://www.epa.gov/hw/household-hazardous-waste-hhw>
https://www3.epa.gov/npdes/pubs/solution_to_pollution.pdf

Check out some of our past environmental bulletins on similar topics [here](#).

