

# Partnership for the Environment

Utah Department of Environmental Quality

# **Household Hazardous Waste Fact Sheet**

### What is Household Hazardous Waste?

Many hazardous products and chemicals such as cleaners, oils and pesticides are used in the home every day. When discarded, these products are called household hazardous waste (HHW). HHWs are discarded materials and products that are ignitable, corrosive, reactive, toxic or otherwise listed as hazardous by the EPA. Products used and disposed of by a typical residence may contain more than 100 hazardous substances including:

$\mathbf{O}$	Batteries	$\circ$	Medicines
O	Cleaners	$\circ$	Motor oil and automotive supplies
O	Cosmetics	$\circ$	Paints, thinners, stains and varnishes
O	Fluorescent light bulbs	$\circ$	Polishes
O	Glues	$\circ$	Swimming pool chemicals
O	Heating oil	$\circ$	Smoke detectors
O	Insecticides and pesticides	$\circ$	Thermometers
$\circ$	Ink	$\circ$	Fuel

#### **HHW** is a Serious Threat

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates the average American household generates 20 pounds of HHW each year. As much as 100 pounds of HHW can accumulate in the home and remain there until the resident moves or undertakes a thorough "spring cleaning."

Since the chemicals found in HHW can cause soil and groundwater contamination, generate hazardous emissions at landfills and disrupt water treatment plants, it is important to dispose of HHW properly. Many solid waste treatment facilities are currently required to screen for HHW to avoid operating under restrictive hazardous waste laws. Furthermore, many communities may be required to establish a HHW collection program in order to qualify for permits to manage storm water.

# **Safe Handling Tips**

The best way to handle household hazardous materials is to completely use the product before disposing of the container. If this is not possible, then the next alternative is to return unused portions to your community household hazardous waste clean-up day. Keep products in their original package with all labels intact. If the container is leaking, place it in a thick plastic bag. Pack the products in a plastic-lined cardboard box to prevent leaks and breakage.

Household hazardous waste clean-up days are for household wastes only. No industrial or commercial wastes and no containers larger than five gallons are accepted. Explosives, radioactive

material and medical wastes are also unacceptable.

HHW can be dangerous to people and pets who come in contact with them. HHW can endanger water supplies, damage sewage treatment systems, and cause other environmental damage. Only use the products as directed. **DO NOT:** 

$\bigcirc$	Flush	HHW	s d	own	the	toilet

- O Pour HHWs down the sink
- O Pour HHWs down a storm drain
- O Pour HHWs on the ground

Contact your local health department or the Division of Solid and Hazardous Waste to determine whether your community has a household hazardous waste collection program.

## **Identify HHW**

Reduce the amount of potentially hazardous products in your home and eliminate what you throw away by following these easy steps:

### 1. Before you buy:

- O Read the labels and be aware of what they mean.
- O Look for these words on labels; they tell you what products may need special handling or disposal.

CautionFlammableCombustiblePoisonCorrosiveToxicDangerVolatileExplosiveWarning

- O Select a product best suited for the job.
- O Buy only what you can use entirely.

### 2. After you buy:

- O Read label precautions and follow directions for safe use.
- O Recycle/dispose of empty containers properly.
- O Share what you can't use with friends or neighbors.
- O Store properly.
- O Use recommended amounts; more is not necessarily better.
- O Use the child-resistant closures and keep them on tightly.

### **For More Information, Contact:**

Division of Solid & Hazardous Waste - (801) 538 - 6170 Division of Drinking Water, Source Protection Program - (801) 536-4200 Environmental Hotline - 1-800-458-0145 Sonja Wallace, Pollution Prevention Coordinator - (801) 536-4477