

What is HHW?

HHW--household hazardous wastes--are hazardous in nature.

But because these wastes are produced in limited quantities by households*, they are not regulated as hazardous under federal and state laws.



Each person in Pennsylvania generates an average of four pounds of HHW each year. HHW includes old paint and paint-related products, pesticides, pool chemicals, drain cleaners, degreasers, car care products and other common household products.



If carelessly managed, HHW can create environmental and public health hazards.

*Households include multiple residences, hotels, motels, bunkhouses, ranger stations, crew quarters, campgrounds, picnic grounds and day-use recreation areas.

How can I identify HHW?

Generally, HHW materials belong to one of the following hazardous waste categories:



CORROSIVES. Examples are drain cleaners, rust removers and oven cleaners. Corrosives have an extremely low or high pH and can burn skin and mucous membranes. Labels usually state, “CORROSIVE—AVOID CONTACT WITH SKIN OR EYES.”



FLAMMABLES. Examples include gasoline, kerosene, fuel oil, butane, oil-based paints and paint thinners. Labels usually say, “EXTREMELY FLAMMABLE—KEEP AWAY FROM ANY SOURCE OF IGNITION” and “HIGHLY FLAMMABLE—KEEP AWAY FROM FLAMES.”



TOXIC MATERIALS. Examples are benzene, cyanide compounds (found in rat fumigants), thallium sulfate (ant traps) and carbon tetrachloride (old fire extinguishers). Materials may be carcinogenic. Labels often contain the skull and crossbones and usually state, “DANGER/POISON” or “WARNING—KEEP OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN.”



OXIDIZERS.



These chemicals react strongly with other compounds and may cause fires or explosions. Examples include chlorinated pool chemicals, sodium hypochlorite and various peroxides. Labels usually say, “WARNING—STRONG OXIDIZER.”

AIR QUALITY HAZARDS could cause excessive emissions or toxic ash problems at resource recovery facilities or incinerators. Examples include thermostats, paints that contain more than one percent by weight of heavy metals, products that contain significant amounts of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), and batteries—nickel, cadmium, lithium and lead acid.

WILDLIFE HAZARDS. Examples include old chlorinated pesticides such as DDT, chlordane, dieldrin, heptachlor, etc. Labels usually indicate the material presents a hazard to fish or wildlife. The material may be immediately toxic or accumulate in various tissues of the fish or animals. Of particular concern are those materials that are slow to degrade and tend to bio-accumulate.



UNKNOWN. Unidentified materials—such as those that contain no label or ingredient information—should be treated as though they belong to one of the above categories until proven otherwise.

What can YOU do about HHW?



1. The best way to manage HHW is to **avoid creating it**. Select the least toxic product to do the job. Buy only as much as you need.
2. Is the product still usable? **Give it away**. A friend, neighbor, or community group such as Little League or Habitat for Humanity may be able to use it.
3. If the product isn't usable, or you can't give it away, take it to your community's **HHW collection program**.
4. Do you have used motor oil or used oil filters? Take them to a **used oil collection site**.
5. **Take spent lead acid batteries back to the place where you bought them**. State law requires dealers to accept old batteries when you buy new ones.
6. If your community doesn't have an HHW collection program, or if you must throw the material away before the next collection, you may **put it in your regular trash, PROVIDED:**
 - a. You have complied with any disposal instructions on the label.
 - b. There are no free-standing liquids. If water-based, allow the liquid to evaporate. If not water-based, absorb the liquid into vermiculite, cat litter, saw dust or other absorbent material.
 - c. You have carefully packaged any residue to prevent leakage while the material is being transported to a disposal facility.
 - d. You have only a small quantity. Divide larger quantities and dispose of them over several collection periods.



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HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW)



What can YOU do about it?