

Household Hazardous Waste Overview



In most households, you will find some leftover cleaners, oil-based paints, pesticides, batteries and/or prescription medicines. If these leftovers are not handled properly, they can be hazardous and are collectively referred to as household hazardous waste (HHW). These products are commonly used to make our modern-day lives easier, but when they are not handled with care, they can be harmful to our health and the environment.

How can HHW harm our health & the environment?

When HHW...

...is sent to landfills, most of which are not designed to handle HHW, it can leach into the ground and contaminate groundwater.

...is poured on the ground, it can poison soil, plants and water.

...is poured down the drain, it can kill the microbes that are used in sewage treatment plants to break down wastes.

...is poured down the drain, it can damage plumbing systems.

...is burned, it can dissipate over a larger area.

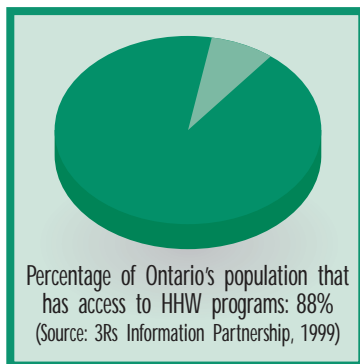
Fast Facts

- Total amount of HHW estimated to be generated in Ontario annually: Between 20,000 and 86,000 tonnes/year (Source: CIELAP)
- Increase of Ontario hazardous waste being sent out-of-province for disposal between 1994 and 1997: More than 50% (Source: An Environmental Agenda for Ontario, CIELAP)
- Quantity of household hazardous waste produced by each Ontario household yearly: 20 to 40 litres (Source: RCO)
- Quantity of household hazardous waste that was recycled by Ontario's municipal HHW programs in 1998: 6,000 tonnes (Source: 3Rs Information Partnership, 1999)

General rules for safe storage of potentially hazardous products:

Read the product label for safe storage methods; if none are provided, use the following:

- Keep products out of reach of children and animals.
- Keep products in their original container with labels intact.
- Place leaking containers in larger containers that will not leak, clearly labeled with product information.
- Ensure that containers are tightly sealed.
- Do not mix chemical products.
- Flammable products should be kept in a cool, dry place.
- If possible, keep harsh chemicals (e.g., pool chemicals, automotive products and pesticides) in a garage or other well-ventilated secure place.
- Frequently check for outdated products and examine the condition of the containers.
- Reduce disposal problems by buying only the amount needed.
- Most HHW depots prefer receiving products in their original containers, and not mixed with other products.



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Material Fact Sheet Series

A Waste Reduction Week '99 Initiative

Collection, Recycling & Disposal of HHW

Municipal Collection Programs

Ontario has 58 HHW programs that service approximately 9.9 million people, or 88% of Ontario's population. (Source: 3Rs Information Partnership, 1999) Municipal offices can provide information on the materials a local HHW collection program accepts and its hours of operation. Collection programs vary by community and can be either depots, event days and/or Toxic Taxis.

Municipal Re-use Programs

Some municipalities run Re-use (or Use-it-up) Programs at their HHW Collection Depots. These programs take advantage of the fact that many items brought in as HHW may be of use to someone else.

Retail Take-Back Programs

Some retailers will take back used products that can become hazardous, for example batteries and motor oil. Ask the retailer when you purchase a product if they have a take-back program.

To identify a product that may become household hazardous waste (HHW) look for these labels:



Corrosive: They eat or wear away at many materials



Reactive: They can cause an explosion or produce dangerous vapours



Flammable: They ignite easily



Toxic: They are poisonous to humans and animals

Household Cleaners

Examples of hazardous household cleaning products: Disinfectants, floor/furniture polish, pool cleaners.

Quantity of household cleaners used by Canadians yearly: Approximately 54,000 tonnes (Source: TerraChoice, 1998)

Safety

Do not mix chlorine cleaners with ammonia or ceramic cleaners. When mixed together these products can form a poisonous gas.



For more information....

• Canadian Institute for Environmental Law & Policy
www.web.net/cielap/hazwaste.htm

• Recycling Council of Ontario
www.rco.on.ca