



# What Do You Do With Household Chemicals?

Fall & Winter 2008



## There's Hazardous Waste in my Home?

If you look closely in your kitchen, bathrooms, basement, or garage, you just might find some household hazardous waste! Many common household products such as drain and oven cleaners, paint, and paint thinner (to name only a few!) contain chemicals that qualify as hazardous waste. These hazardous substances are toxic, corrosive, can easily catch fire, or are dangerous when mixed with other chemicals. If you see the words *caution*, *hazardous*, *danger*, *flammable*, or *poison*, you know to use these products with caution. You need to use caution when disposing them, too.



## Don't Pour It Out!

When toxic chemicals are poured down household drains, storm drains, toilets, or on the ground, those chemicals are likely to end up in nearby waters. Even throwing household chemicals in the trash can contaminate water resources, once they are in the landfill. And your garbage collector will thank you, too! Many trash handlers have been injured by fumes and splashing chemicals.

In Rhode Island, you can make an appointment to bring your household chemicals to the Eco-Depot, a free drop-off at the Rhode Island Resource Recovery Corporation's facility at the Central Landfill in Johnston. Call 942-1430 ext. 241 to schedule a date and time.

## Do I Have Other Options?

Yes! Here are a few ideas for reducing the amount of household hazardous waste in your home, which means less waste you have to dispose of.

- If the product is still useable, but you don't need it all, share with friends or neighbors who might need it.
- Buy only what you need for the job you're working on. More is not always better, when you think about the extra effort to store and dispose of the product.
- Choose non-hazardous products when you can. Lemon juice, vinegar, hot water, borax, soap, and baking soda are good alternatives to harsh, chemical cleansers. Check online for non-toxic home cleaning recipes.
- Buy phosphate-free, biodegradable detergents and cleaners and water-based products, when possible, as these are typically less toxic.



## A Few Good Recipes

**All-purpose cleaner:** ½ cup vinegar and ¼ cup baking soda mixed into ½ gallon of water

**Bathroom mold:** mix one part hydrogen peroxide (3%) with two parts water; spray on mold and wait one hour before cleaning

**Carpet stains:** ¼ cup borax, ¼ cup salt, and ¼ cup vinegar mixed into a paste; leave on stain for a few hours, then vacuum

**Drain cleaner:** pour ½ cup baking soda down the drain, then ½ cup vinegar; after 15 minutes, pour in boiling water to clear residue. Caution: only use this method with metal plumbing. Plastic pipes can melt if excess boiling water is used. Do not use this method after trying a commercial drain opener; the vinegar can react with the drain opener to create dangerous fumes.

**Toilet bowl cleaner:** ¼ cup baking soda mixed with 1 cup vinegar; pour into toilet bowl and let it sit before scrubbing

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*Storm drains lead directly to local waters. No filters. No treatment. Chemicals that enter storm drains wind up in the water we drink, fish, and swim.*

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## The Usual Suspects

How can you tell if the product you want to throw away is toxic and needs special disposal procedures? Read the label! If in doubt, the following list includes common household items that contain hazardous ingredients:

**Cleaning products:** oven cleaners, drain cleaners, wood and metal cleaners and polishes, toilet cleaners, tub, tile and shower cleaners, bleach, pool cleaners

**Automotive products:** motor oil, fuel additives, carburetor and fuel injection cleaners, air conditioning refrigerants, starter fluids, automotive batteries, transmission and brake fluid, antifreeze

**Lawn and garden products:** herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, wood preservatives

**Indoor pesticides:** ant and cockroach sprays and bait, flea repellants and shampoos, bug sprays, houseplant insecticides, moth repellants, mouse and rat poisons and baits

**Workshop or painting supplies:** adhesives and glues, furniture strippers, oil- or enamel-based paint, stains and finishes, paint thinners and turpentine, paint strippers and removers, photographic chemicals, fixatives, and other solvents

**Flammable products:** propane tanks and other compressed gas cylinders, kerosene, home heating fuel, diesel fuel, gas/oil mix, lighter fluid

**Miscellaneous:** batteries, mercury thermometers or thermostats, fluorescent or energy-efficient light bulbs, driveway sealer

## For more information:

Visit our website: <http://www.ristormwatersolutions.org>.