



Managing Hazardous Materials/Waste

Thank you for joining us again this week, as discussed in last week's article, almost every home contains hazardous products. They are used in cleaning, home improvement projects, automobile maintenance, lawn and garden care, and a variety of other tasks. However behind all the usage of these products, come a number of health and environment problems. In order to avoid potential risks associated with household hazardous wastes, it is important for us to always know how to properly manage, store and dispose of these products. **Here are some quick tips for managing household hazardous material/wastes include:**

- Read labels carefully before buying a product. Avoid buying products with labels containing the words such as; caustic, corrosive, danger, explosive, flammable, poison, toxic, volatile, or warning;
- Follow label directions on how to use a product, and use the recommended amounts. More is not necessarily better, and may be hazardous to your health;
- Use safer products whenever possible. Safer alternative products can be found in stores. Recipes for making your own can be found in books available through most libraries or online;
- Buy household hazardous products only in the amount you need for the job at hand;
- Safely store the remaining, unusable products in their original containers until a household hazardous waste collection is held in your area;
- Avoid hazardous products if you are pregnant;
- Recycle what can be recycled in your area (waste motor oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze, automotive batteries, button batteries, etc.) Contact local solid waste officials for locations in your area;
- Keep products in their original containers with readable labels;
- Use safety equipment such as protective eyes wear or face shield, mask and or gloves when the label recommends avoiding skin contact, eye contact, or inhalation of vapors;

- Use products up entirely. It is not hazardous waste until it is no longer wanted or usable; and
- Share what you cannot use with a friend, neighbour, local business or organization.

Here are some quick tips you should follow for storing household hazardous material/waste safely:

- Close lids tightly so that products will not dry out, evaporate, or leak;
- Store hazardous products in a locked cabinet away from children and animals;
- Store in a cool, dry area;
- Store away from sources of heat, spark, or flame;
- Store in original containers with label intact;
- If the product container is deteriorating, place the entire container in a plastic bucket or glass jar with a tight-fitting lid. Surround it with a non-flammable absorbent, such as kitty litter, vermiculite, or floor dry, to absorb spills; and
- Separate flammables, corrosives, and poisons and store them on separate shelves.

For disposing household hazardous material/waste safely

Some quick tips for disposing household hazardous material/waste safely include:

Reuse: means to use the product again. Household solvents, such as paint thinner and paint brush cleaner, can be used over and over. Let the used solvent sit undisturbed in a sealed container until the paint particles settle to the bottom. Carefully pour off the clean solvent and use it again.

Warning

Since these solvents are flammable, this activity should be done outdoors or with plenty of fresh air and adequate ventilation, and away from sources of heat, spark, or flame.

Triple-rinse container: is the prescribed treatment method for empty pesticide containers. To triple-rinse, fill the container 1/4 full with water close it tightly, and shake or invert so the rinse reaches all inside surfaces. Repeat this procedure two more

times. Rinse water should be used to make up the pesticide mixture or applied to the area you are treating following the same precautions used with the full-strength pesticide. Plastic containers should be punctured to prevent reuse. Discard the rinsed container with your trash.

Warning

Do not triple-rinse pesticide containers in a household sink, or outside near drinking water wellheads. If you cannot reuse the rinse water, save unrinsed containers for a household hazardous waste collection.

Recycle: is the preferred option for any household hazardous product that can be recycled. Try contacting jewelers or hearing aid service stores to see if they will accept button batteries for recycling. Automotive service centers may accept used motor oil, auto batteries, antifreeze, kerosene, and transmission fluid. Theater and art groups, or housing "fix-up" organizations may be happy to receive leftover paint.

Flush down drain: indicates that a product can be poured down the drain with plenty of water. If you have a septic tank, additional caution should be taken. Read the product label to determine whether the product might damage your plumbing or your septic system. Never mix wastes while pouring them down the drain. Always pour small amounts at a time to avoid splashing, and flush with plenty of water. Put in trash: indicates that a product is suitable for landfill disposal. Generally speaking, empty containers can be thrown away. Liquids should never be disposed of in the trash. Some products are acceptable for landfill disposal if they are hardened or dried up. Contact your local solid waste officials before throwing any hazardous product away.

Remember "*The environment is everybody's business*" Let us all do our part for a cleaner and safer Guyana!

You can share your ideas and questions by sending letters to: "Our Earth. Our Environment," C/O ECEA Programme, Environmental Protection Agency, Ganges Street, Sophia, Georgetown, or email us at: eit.epaguyana@gmail.com or follow us on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Reference: <https://www.epa.gov/hw/household-hazardous-waste-hhw>