



REDUCE NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

in Louisiana Waters

Household Hazardous Products

Some of the products we commonly use in our homes can be hazardous to human health and pose hazards to the environment. Health problems can be caused by chemicals in some products in our homes – if product warnings and directions for proper use are not heeded. Health effects can range from minor problems, such as irritable skin and watery eyes, to more serious problems, such as burns, poisoning or even cancer. Most products can be safely used if product directions are followed. People get in trouble by using too much of a product or by mixing two products together.

A hazardous household product is a product purchased for residential use that exhibits one or more of the following characteristics.

Flammable/ignitable. Any substance that can be easily set on fire. Examples include gasoline, paint strippers or thinners, furniture polish and some adhesives.

Explosive/reactive. Any substance that can cause an explosion or violent reaction when subjected to heat, sudden shock pressure or contact with an incompatible substance. Examples include fireworks, ammunition and pool chemicals.

Corrosive. Corrosives are substances that burn and destroy living tissues and will begin to dissolve metals when brought into contact with them. Examples include drain cleaners, oven cleaners, some rust removers and swimming pool cleaners.

Toxic. Any substance that can cause injury or death through ingestion, inhalation or skin absorption. Examples include pesticides, heavy metals, corrosives and some solvents.

Radioactive. Any substance that can damage the nuclei of cells, interfering with cell production by changing the genetic cell structure. Examples include ionizing smoke detectors, gas lantern mantles and static eliminators.

Hazardous Product Categories

Automotive products. Almost everything used in the operation of automobiles and other engines is hazardous. Gasoline, diesel, kerosene, motor oil, transmission fluid and other fuels and lubricants derived from crude petroleum and contain chemical additives. Products such as antifreeze, windshield washer fluid, brake fluid, car wax and vinyl cleaner used in the cleaning and maintenance of automobiles are also hazardous.

Household cleaners. Many household cleaners contain organic solvents, strong corrosives and synthetic chemicals. Examples include furniture polish, spot removers, floor wax, oven cleaner, drain opener, rust remover, tub and tile cleaner, dishwasher and laundry detergents.

Home improvement products. This category includes the decorative and protective coating materials and solvents used in the construction and maintenance of buildings. Examples include adhesives, caulk, paint, paint thinner, paint stripper varnish and stain.

Pesticides. Pesticides are substances that destroy or repel plants and animals that human consider to “pests.” This group includes insecticides, herbicides, mildicides, rodenticides, wood preservatives and fertilizers with added herbicides.

Miscellaneous. This category is designated for those products that do not easily fit into the other four categories. It includes batteries, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, swimming pool chemicals, arts and craft materials, ammunition and fireworks.



Exposure

Exposure to a product may be by ingestion; breathing fumes or dust; or contact with skin or eyes. The potential for harm from exposure depends on the type of chemical, the frequency of exposure or the individual's size weight and health.

It is important to follow label directions in storing and using household chemicals. Always work in a well-ventilated area, and wear protective clothing and gloves if directed. Never smoke or eat while using household chemicals, and always store in original container. Some chemicals will cause a reaction right away, like watery eyes or burning skin. Other problems don't show up until later, like cancer or harm to lungs.

Hazardous Waste

Once products have been used, how do we discard containers or leftovers? The way we manage products can affect the environment. Ingredients in some products can be hazardous to plants and animals. Pesticides such as motor oil washing into a stream can harm fish. Human health also can be threatened if our food, water or air becomes contaminated through improper use or disposal of household products. Again, follow the label directions on disposal. Share leftovers, take to hazardous waste sites or recycle. Never dump or burn hazardous waste. When in doubt, check it out!

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