



# REDUCE NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

*in Louisiana Waters*

## Safe Storage of Household Hazardous Waste

Leftover or used chemicals such as strippers, paints waste oil, used antifreeze and solvents may need to be stored until their next use or disposal. How and where you store household products can determine how much risk may be present.

### Are Your Storage Locations and Containers Really Safe?

When storing household products, the primary concerns are child safety, indoor air quality, water contamination and prevention of damage to household equipment or the environment. If you can smell a household product while it is in storage, the container lid may be loose or ventilation may be inadequate to protect your health.

### When you store household products, do you:

- Keep them out of the reach of children and pets, preferably in a locked, secure area?
- Store them in their original containers?
- Clearly label and date any alternative containers?
- Keep containers tightly sealed and dry?
- Store products at least 150 feet from a well or waterway?
- Keep products in a well-ventilated area and away from sources of ignition?
- Store batteries and flammable chemicals in an area shaded from direct sunlight?

Use and store potentially hazardous products as far as possible from a private well. Do not use a well house to temporarily store home pesticides or other hazardous products. Use care when using lawn or garden pesticides if your well is less than 100 feet away or if it is downhill of the application area. Immediately clean up oil, antifreeze, fuel or solvent spills.

Be sure to separate corrosives like acids or lye from each other and from other hazardous products to prevent dangerous chemical reactions. Reactions occur when corrosives leak from their containers and drip or flow to other products. Corrosive materials are often stored where equipment and appliances are located; be aware that they can corrode air conditioning and heating systems, hot water heaters and other equipment or appliances. Routinely check areas where you store household products (under the kitchen sink, in the basement or garage) to make sure that containers are closed tightly and not leaking and that the sides of containers are not bulging.

Unless a product is used up, you will have to dispose of it. For some products that are especially hazardous — like pesticides — even the product container will have to be disposed of properly. In Louisiana, some hazardous wastes from individual households are banned from disposal in municipal solid waste landfills. These include lead-acid batteries, used oil, whole waste tires and small-sealed lead-acid batteries. Some of these items can be taken to your local recycling or convenience center. Items accepted for recycling can vary in each city and parish. Check with your local center before bringing items to it.

You may be able to donate leftover paint, household cleaners or other products to local charity, church or service organizations. Theater groups, the local housing authority or nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity may be able to use small quantities of useable paint or cleaning products.



## What Is The Best Way to Dispose of Leftover Hazardous Products?

Disposal should be your last option because it is wasteful and, if not done properly, can be unsafe for you and the environment. You can avoid the disposal dilemma by buying only what you need, using up your leftovers or recycling. By giving leftover products to a neighbor or local organization that can use them, you can turn a potential waste problem into a cost-saving opportunity. Some communities sponsor swap programs to encourage sharing; options for recycling are increasing. Used motor oil and batteries, for example, are accepted for recycling in many automobile repair shops and recycling center sites. Some pesticide containers may be returned to where they were purchased for safe disposal.

Some cities and communities sponsor occasional or permanent household hazardous waste collection programs. Because only certain hazardous products may be accepted, contact the program to learn exactly what materials are accepted. Household quantities of some products can be safely sent to a landfill. For example, leftover paint — if local regulations permit — can be evaporated in its can. When dry, the can with its hardened contents can be discarded in household garbage.

## Paint and Pesticides Merit Special Attention

We all buy too much paint. Municipalities that collect leftover hazardous household products report that paints make up about half of the material that people bring and thus are a costly (but avoidable) disposal expense. The best practice is to avoid leftovers by calculating how much paint you'll actually need before you buy. Salespeople at paint stores can help you with these calculations. Most leftover paint can be safely managed by sharing it with neighbors or organizations. However, leftover lead-based paints or exterior paints containing mercury or pesticides should be treated as hazardous waste.

We don't pay enough attention to how we manage pesticides. A 1992 Environmental Protection Agency study of pesticide use in homes and gardens provided disturb-

ing information about how pesticides are used, stored and thrown away. Household practices showed that people fail to recognize the danger that pesticides can pose to child safety, human health or the environment when managed improperly. Before you choose a pesticide, be sure you have exhausted other options for controlling the pest, weed or fungus problem. If you do need to use a pesticide, read label information carefully before purchasing a product. Buy only what you need. Pay attention to use and disposal recommendations described on labels. Before disposal, use up the product if possible. Rinse empty containers of liquid pesticides. Use the rinse water as part of your yard and garden management.

To reduce your need for pesticides in the home:

- Maintain regular cleaning habits, especially in the kitchen.
- Caulk cracks and other openings to the outside.
- Keep screens repaired.
- Keep houseplants healthy by providing appropriate care.

## Is Dumping or Burning a Safe Alternative?

It's never appropriate to dump or burn hazardous products on your property, particularly near wells or water sources. Nor should products be poured down storm sewers. Water-soluble cleaning products may be safely disposed down the drain if you flush the drain with plenty of water. Septic system owners need to be especially careful, however. With septic systems, the rule of thumb is moderation. Don't dump large amounts of anything into the septic system. Septic systems are not designed to treat chemicals. If the product is specifically designed to be used in the home with water, moderate use will not harm the system. Burning hazardous wastes in a barrel or stove is never an alternative, and it's illegal in many states. Burning may release toxic gases and produce hazardous ash.

Source: *Clemson University, South Carolina Home-A-Syst.*

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