

# Toxic Truth

#### What do I do with household hazardous products?

#### DO USE IT UP

If you have a household hazardous product use it for its intended purpose and then make a point of not buying that product in the future.

DO GIVE THE PRODUCT TO SOMEONE ELSE WHO CAN USE IT If you no longer want a household hazardous product in your home give it to someone who can use it for its intended purpose.

## DO SAVE THE PRODUCT FOR A MUNICIPAL COLLECTION DAY

Many communities hold municipal collection days when you can take your household hazardous products to a collection site for safe disposal. Call your district or municipality to find out when one will be happening in your area.

## DO AVOID BUYING HAZARDOUS PRODUCTS IN THE FUTURE

The best thing to do with household hazardous products is to not buy them in the first place. Before buying a product make sure you know how you will be able to dispose of it properly.

### DON'T THROW IT IN THE GARBAGE

Most of British Columbia's residential garbage is collected door-to-door by private collection companies or is taken to drop-off centers by individuals. Ultimately the trash ends up in a landfill. Most landfills are not designed for household hazardous wastes. Hazardous waste can leak into water supplies or cause air pollution, or both.

### DON'T POUR IT DOWN THE DRAIN

When you pour hazardous household products down the sink or flush them down the toilet these poisons enter either a septic system or municipal sewer system.

If you have a septic system, wastewater from your house goes into a tank buried underground. The solids settle out and partially decompose. The remaining wastewater then goes into a drain field where solids settle out and partially decompose. The remaining wastewater then goes into a drain field where the natural processes ongoing in the soil help to further break down the wastewater. Toxic materials in that wastewater can kill the helpful bacteria and the system will not operate properly.

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#### Toxic Truth continued

Some toxic materials move through the soil untreated or unchanged. When this happens, ground water or surface waters may become contaminated.

If your home is hooked to a municipal sewage system, your wastewater is piped to a central sewage plant. After treatment, it is discharged into local waterways. Most municipal systems rely on bacteria or other organisms to decompose the waste. Some hazardous household waste can pass through the system unchanged and thus pollute the water downstream.

## DON'T POUR IT INTO DITCHES STORM DRAINS OR GUTTERS

Household hazardous waste that is poured into ditches, storm drains, or gutters travels directly to nearby waterways. It can poison plants and wildlife, contaminate the soil, and be harmful to children and adults who come into contact with it.

#### DON'T BURN IT

If you burn hazardous waste, you risk producing poisonous fumes, contributing to air pollution or causing an explosion.

Controlled burning in special hazardous waste incinerators by trained professionals can be a good disposal method. Open burning by an untrained homeowner is not. Some hazardous materials may not burn away completely and become concentrated in the ash.

#### DON'T DUMP IT OR BURY IT

If you dump or bury some types of hazardous household wastes, they may leach through the soil and contaminate the soil or water, especially if the waste is persistent or non-biodegradable. Children or pets and wildlife may be hurt. Dogs frequently are poisoned by drinking antifreeze left on roads or driveways.

IMPORTANT NOTE: Even if a container seems empty, it is rarely empty of all chemicals. There is always some liquid the pump will not spray and almost always chemical residue on the sides and bottom of the container.