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Or contact your county to find out about household hazardous waste disposal options in your area.

Visit the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality Pollution Prevention website!  
[www.deq.idaho.gov/pollution-prevention](http://www.deq.idaho.gov/pollution-prevention)

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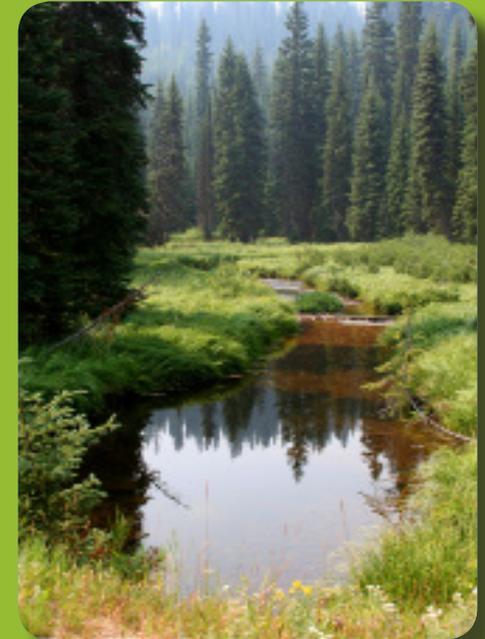
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# Household Hazardous Waste and You



Courtesy of Idaho Tourism

*Hazards, alternatives, and disposal options for household hazardous waste in Idaho*



**Idaho Department of Environmental Quality**  
[www.deq.idaho.gov](http://www.deq.idaho.gov)



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## What is Household Hazardous Waste?

Hazardous waste is waste with properties that make it dangerous or potentially harmful to human health or the environment. It can be liquids, solids, contained gases, or sludges. Household hazardous waste (HHW) is hazardous waste that is generated in a home rather than a business or organization. Americans generate 1.6 million tons of HHW each year.



## Household Hazardous Waste Characterization

**Persistent:** These are wastes that take a long time to break down, can travel easily through different mediums (air, land, water), and are hazardous to human health.

**Bioaccumulative:** These wastes, such as mercury, bioaccumulate in the tissues of animals and are not excreted.

**Toxic:** Exposure to toxic substances can lead to a number of ailments in humans and animals, terrestrial and aquatic, and can include increased risk of cancer, reproductive and endocrine disruptions, and effects of the nervous system.

## Household Hazardous Waste Classification

**Flammable:** These wastes easily catch fire or explode when exposed to heat or sudden shock.

- Examples include gasoline, aerosols, oil-based paints, and furniture polish.

**Reactive:** Reactive wastes are unstable, react violently or explode, and/or give off toxic gases.

- A mixture of chlorine bleach and ammonia is reactive and highly toxic.

**Corrosive:** These waste products can burn or damage living tissue on contact.

- Examples include acid-containing batteries and other strong acids.

**Toxic:** Such wastes can cause injury or death if swallowed, inhaled, or absorbed through the skin or eyes.

- Pesticides, certain household cleaners, mercury-containing thermometers, thermostats, and broken compact fluorescent light bulbs are all toxic.

## Additional Household Hazardous Waste Dangers

In addition to being hazardous in its own right, HHW can present other dangers that are less obvious. First responders and sanitation workers can be exposed to deadly gases and explosive reactions if materials are disposed of improperly. For instance, mixing pool cleaner with a carbonated beverage produces deadly chlorine gas. Countless concoctions can be created by unintentional mixing of hazardous chemicals.

## Options for Consumers

Consumers who wish to reduce the amount of HHW they accumulate have two primary options.

**Pollution Prevention:** The first step toward reducing the generation of HHW is pollution prevention.

Some examples of pollution prevention including the following:

- Evaluate your needs and look for nontoxic alternatives for the particular task at hand, such as cleaning with baking soda instead of chemical cleaners.
- Purchase less-toxic products that are certified by a reputable organization.
- Buy only what you need.
- Determine if your area has a hazardous materials exchange where you can pick up leftover cleaners and solvents and use only what you need.

**Disposal:** Disposal is the second means of reducing HHW. To reduce the amount of HHW you dispose, consider pollution prevention as a first step before purchasing hazardous products.

- Determine if your city or county has an HHW collection program and when and where you can drop off products.
- Dispose of any HHW in an appropriate manner and as advised by your local solid waste authority or as instructed by any labeling on the product package.