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FIRE DEPARTMENT

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HAZARDOUS WASTE - BRING IT IN AND WE ALL WIN

Community Risk Reduction – Proper disposal of household hazardous materials

MUSCATINE, Iowa - Common household materials can be hazardous when not handled or disposed of properly. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) considers some leftover household products that can catch fire, react, or explode under certain circumstances, or that are corrosive or toxic, as household hazardous waste (HHW).



When you choose to bring in your leftover items, like cleaning products and gardening supplies, to a regional recycling center you are helping everyone in your community win. Making a drop off at your Regional Collection Center (RCC) is as easy as looking up the location of your closest RCC, collecting any unwanted items from around your home, and safely transporting them to the center.



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Here is some information about HHW and about [Muscatine's RCC](#) located at the Muscatine Transfer Station, 1000 South Houser Street, Muscatine.

Proper Household Hazardous Waste Disposal

All county and city residents within Muscatine County and Louisa County can dispose of their household hazardous waste at the Transfer Station for no cost. This program is to provide safe disposal of household hazardous waste for residents. Residents can bring in their household hazardous waste during our regular business hours.

Muscatine Transfer Station

Monday - Friday 7 a.m.- 3:15 p.m.

Saturday - 8 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Businesses who are interested in disposal of hazardous waste need to [email David Popp](#), Solid Waste Manager, for more details of where and how to dispose of hazardous materials.

What is Household Hazardous Material?

Household hazardous materials can be defined as household products that contain 1 or more of the following characteristics:

- **Combustible** - Capable of being easily set of fire
- **Corrosive** - Capable of burning or destroying living tissues and materials by means of a chemical reaction.
- **Reactive** - Capable of exploding if exposed to heat or extreme pressure. May react violently when exposed to incompatible materials.
- **Toxic** - The ability to cause severe injury or death if inhaled, ingested, or absorbed through the skin.



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What Are Household Hazardous Materials?

Household hazardous materials (HHMs) are found in nearly every home, under every sink, in closets, basements, and garages. Consequently, nearly every household in the state generates household hazardous waste. These materials are likely to end up in local solid waste facilities or in municipal sewer systems, septic tanks or even released directly into the environment unless steps are taken to manage this waste independently from other household wastes.

Are household products really that dangerous? I use them every day.

Common household products like cleaners make chores easier but they can also pose a threat to public health, safety, and the environment if not disposed of properly. The cleaners in your home have the same chemicals found in industrial factories, just in smaller amounts. Cleaners contain hazardous chemicals that can cause health concerns such as skin irritations, aggravation of respiratory diseases, and even cancer. Health effects caused by hazardous waste can be acute (sudden or immediate onset of severe symptoms) or chronic (gradual onset of symptoms occurring through repeated exposures over an extended period of time).

Children are of special concern, as they are often more susceptible to the toxins in household materials than adults. For children, the impacts can be more severe as their systems have not yet fully developed. In fact, hazardous household products are the leading cause of poisonings in children.

How can I tell if a household product is hazardous?

Labels on household products considered hazardous may contain one of the following signal words: Warning, Caution, Danger, Poison. Signal words appear because household products have one or more of the following characteristics:

Toxic



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- Toxic products are poisonous or can cause long-term illness.
- Look for phrases on the product label like "harmful," "fatal if swallowed," or "use only in a well-ventilated area," which means that fumes from the product are toxic.
- Examples: Pesticides, paint thinners, automotive products, and some cleaners

Flammable

- Flammable products burn easily.
- Look for words or phrases on the product label like "do not use near heat or flame," "combustible," and "do not smoke while using this product."
- Examples: Paint, automotive products, thinners, and other solvents

Corrosive

- Corrosive products can eat through materials.
- Look for phrases on the product label like "causes severe burns on contact" and "can burn eyes, skin or throat."
- Examples: Acid, oven cleaners, drain cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, and automotive batteries

Reactive

- Reactive materials can spontaneously ignite or create poisonous vapors when mixed with other products. For that reason, household products should never be mixed.
- Some reactive materials can explode when exposed to heat, air and water or when shaken.

How can I safely handle household products that may be considered hazardous?

Information on handling specific products can be found on the product label. Labels will tell you what the product is for, how to use it, proper storage, the risks you are exposed to, and what to do if you have an accident.

How do I use and store hazardous materials?



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All of us have hazardous products like cleaners, oils or aerosols in our homes that require special care when using, storing or disposing of them. These products may pose serious fire, health or environmental hazards. To minimize risks associated with these products, read and follow product labels.

When Using Hazardous Products at Home

Always:

- Read the label for directions on using the product. Use the product only as intended, as it can be dangerous to use a product incorrectly.
- Follow safety precautions listed on the label. Labels may recommend wearing gloves, goggles, or using the product with ventilation.
- Look for first aid instructions on the label; they may vary for each product according to their ingredients.
- Put cleaning products away immediately after using the amount needed for the job at hand. This will limit accessibility to young children and pets and will help prevent accidental spills.
- Have a plan to handle small spills of household hazardous materials. Keep emergency numbers next to the phone, including the Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- Properly close all containers.

Avoid:

- Mixing cleaning products. Products which are safe when used alone can sometimes become dangerous if mixed with other products. As an example, avoid mixing products containing liquid household bleach (sodium hypochlorite) with products containing ammonia or acids. Such mixtures can release hazardous gases.
- Reusing an empty household cleaning product container for another purpose. Many hazardous home products look like sports drinks or sodas and if stored without a label in a different bottle could be mistaken for a beverage.



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- Use more product than recommended. Follow the product label use guidelines. Using more than the recommended amount will not perform better and may produce harmful fumes.

When Storing Hazardous Products in Your Home

Always:

- Store all containers out of the reach of children and pets.
- Store cleaning products in their original containers, keeping the original labels intact.
- Store hazardous household materials away from heat, flame, or sources of ignition in a well-ventilated area.
- Refer to the label for storage instructions. Most cleaning products have long shelf lives and can be stored until they can be used.

Avoid:

- Storing cleaning products in a container that once contained a food or beverage. A child may mistakenly eat or drink it. Many hazardous home products look similar to sports drinks or soft drinks. Even a small amount can pose significant risks.
- Storing cleaning products near food products as they could spill or leak and contaminate food.
- Storing flammable liquids or gasses in the home near heat or spark sources (charcoal lighter or propane cylinders).

How do I dispose of hazardous household products?

People across the state can properly dispose of these materials at a collection of facilities called Regional Collection Centers (RCCs). RCC services are free to residents within their service area. Services for eligible businesses are available at a small fee.

Common household products can contain many of the chemical types found in industrial and commercial hazardous waste. Though individually they are less concentrated, when gathered



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together in the trash, collection vehicles or the landfill, these products can be as harmful as industrial and commercial grade chemical waste. Proper disposal is critical in protecting our health, the safety of sanitation workers, and our environment, including fish and wildlife as well as our drinking water resources.

To find out how you can properly dispose of hazardous items you can:

- Locate your nearest regional collection center and schedule an appointment to take your hazardous materials for proper disposal and recycling.
- Contact your local solid waste agency about proper disposal methods.
- Look for local options for recycling electronic waste, automotive products, and fluorescent bulbs.

Do not dump hazardous materials into ditches, pour them down drains or sewers, or place them in the trash. Each of these actions has negative consequences:

- Dumping in ditches releases hazardous chemicals directly into the environment.
- Pouring down drains and storm sewers has caused explosions in the sewer system. Storm sewers typically empty directly into lakes and streams, creating a path for hazardous chemicals to impact drinking water, recreation, and aquatic life.
- Placing in the trash easily creates the opportunity for incompatible chemicals to mix. Chemical reactions can result in explosions, fires, and toxic fumes causing personal injury and damage to garbage trucks and equipment.

What happens to my hazardous household items after I drop them off at my local collection center?

The employees at your Regional Collection Center (RCC) will keep your materials in their original container, sort them by type (corrosive, acid, aerosol), then place them in 55-gallon



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barrels. These barrels are sealed and stored in an explosive-proof storage unit until they are picked up for disposal by a licensed hazardous waste contractor.

[Iowa Department of Natural Resources – Household Hazardous Material \(HTML\)](#)

[EPA – Safe Management of HHW \(HTML\)](#)

[Bring it in – We All Win, Iowa DNR \(YouTube Video\)](#)

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