



## **Hazardous Household Waste**

Buy a can of paint. Take it home. Open it. Paint something.

What you have left is household hazardous waste (or HHW).

It's hazardous because there is stuff in paint that is not good for the environment. You wouldn't want it in your backyard, so it really shouldn't go to the landfill site.

It should never, ever be poured down the sink, or down the toilet, or down the drain, never.

Sinks and toilets are connected to a sewage plant or to a septic system, neither of which is designed to handle paints, thinners or other hazardous products. Drains are connected with sanitary sewers, which lead to sewage plants, or with storm sewers, which lead to waterways like rivers or lakes. Therefore, anyone who pours oil down a storm drain, may as well go pour it straight into the nearest stream.

So what should you do with paint, pesticides, metal polish, solvents, wood preservatives, etc.?  
The fact is that many things we use every day at home are classed as hazardous and when we have finished with them we have to find a safe way of disposing with them. For a long time, these things have been thrown in the garbage with everything else, and burned or land filled. Is it any wonder people have concerns about pollution?

It may seem strange but you can drive home from the store with a couple of cans of paint in the back of the station wagon, and yet as soon as the municipality decides to take the empty cans for recycling or disposal somewhere, it needs a special certificate for transporting hazardous waste.

Both involve special ministry licenses and a lot of expense.

Many communities have household hazardous waste depots, or schedule hazardous waste days, where people can deliver their hazardous items too. Many of the materials brought in are not sent for recycling, rather than disposal, and this is also saving some big dollars.

A couple of larger centers have tried the toxic taxi concept where, essentially, a dedicated vehicle is sent to your home to collect your hazardous waste, but you can imagine how much that costs, and as a taxpayer, you are funding it.

If you don't have immediate access to one of these depots, the best thing to do with your hazardous items is to store them. Please store them away from heat sources, and away from the inquiring fingers of children.

What is hazardous?

There is usually something on the label, but as a general rule, if you wouldn't want to see it in your drinking water, or if it came in a can or a jar from the hardware store, it's probably hazardous.

The list includes paint (which can account for up to half the hazardous household waste collected), used oil, aerosol cans, antifreeze, asbestos, cosmetics, degreasers, flea powder, herbicides, metal polish, nail polish, oven cleaner, pool chemicals, solvents, batteries, drain cleaner, floor wax, medicines, pesticides, propane cylinders and wood preservatives.

Please remember that these items should not be poured down the sink, drain or toilet. In most cases, there are safer alternatives to hazardous household products.

For more information about local household hazardous waste programs, call Valerie Harvey at the city of Brockville 342-8772, Ext. 8231.

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