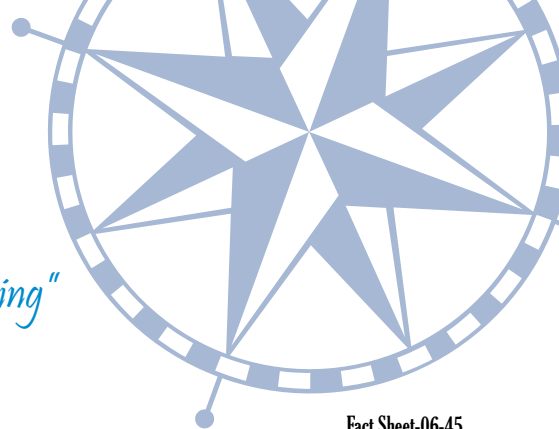




Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials

*"Protecting water quality through community planning"*



Fact Sheet-06-45

## POW: Protecting Our Water ACTION GUIDE SERIES ACTION GUIDE #4

# What to Do About Household Chemicals

*By Melody Hefner, NEMO Nevada Program Assistant,  
and Susan Donaldson, Water Quality Education Specialist,  
University of Nevada Cooperative Extension*



any common household products such as paint, paint thinners, drain and oven cleaners, as well as many cleansers, contain toxic chemicals. When improperly used or discarded, these products are a threat to public health and the environment.

*"If your community  
does not already  
have a program for  
collecting household  
hazardous wastes, ask  
your local government  
to establish one."*

### Here are ways that you can help:

- Buy only what you need for the immediate job. A three-pack of drain cleaner at a discount warehouse store may cost less per can, but do you really need three bottles of drain cleaner in your home? Can you use up the product in a reasonable amount of time?
- Follow label directions for use. More is not better!
- Read labels and select nontoxic substitutes or less toxic alternatives whenever possible.
- Select phosphate-free, biodegradable detergents and cleaners to help reduce the amount of nutrients discharged to surface waters and groundwater.
- Choose water-based products whenever possible, as these are typically less toxic and biodegrade more rapidly than petroleum- or solvent-based products.
- Store any leftover products in their original containers in a location that maintains the suggested storage temperatures.
- Share unused products with friends and neighbors. Keep them in their original labeled containers.
- Never mix chemicals together.
- Don't burn or bury leftover chemicals or containers.



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- ➔ Do not dispose of toxic chemicals with regular household trash. Chemicals may leach from the garbage dump or landfill and contaminate groundwater resources.
- ➔ Do not pour toxic chemicals down any drain or dispose of them in the toilet. Both septic systems and treatment plants rely on bacterial processes to break down human wastes. Toxic chemicals can kill these beneficial bacteria, disrupting waste processing and increasing treatment costs.
- ➔ Never dispose of toxic chemicals in storm drains. Storm drains deliver these chemicals directly to streams and rivers, with no prior treatment. It's like dumping the chemicals directly into your local river!
- ➔ Never pour unwanted toxic chemicals on the ground. Direct dumping may overwhelm the ability of the soil to break down most toxic chemicals, and they will eventually contaminate surface waters and/or groundwater. **Properly dispose of these chemicals by taking them to a hazardous waste collection center. Call the Nevada Recycling Hotline, (800) 597-5865, go to <http://ndep.nv.gov/recycl/hotline.htm>, or contact your local county solid waste management office for information regarding hazardous waste collection in your area.** If your community does not already have a program for collecting household hazardous wastes, ask your local government to establish one.

## Do you have surplus products?

**How can you tell if the product you want to throw away is toxic and needs special disposal procedures? Read the label!** The words **caution**, **warning** and **danger** can indicate that one or more of the ingredients in the product are harmful. The following list includes common household items that contain potentially hazardous ingredients.

- ➔ **Cleaning products:** oven cleaners, drain cleaners, wood and metal cleaners and polishes, toilet cleaners, tub, tile and shower cleansers, bleach, pool chemicals
- ➔ **Automotive products:** motor oil, fuel additives, carburetor and fuel injection cleaners, air conditioning refrigerants, starter fluids, automotive batteries, transmission and brake fluid, antifreeze
- ➔ **Lawn and garden products:** herbicides, pesticides, fungicides, wood preservatives
- ➔ **Indoor pesticides:** ant and cockroach sprays and bait, flea repellents and shampoos, bug sprays, houseplant insecticides, moth repellents, mouse and rat poisons and baits
- ➔ **Workshop or painting supplies:** adhesives and glues, furniture strippers, oil- or enamel-based paint, stains and finishes, paint thinners and turpentine, paint strippers and removers, photographic chemicals, fixatives and other solvents
- ➔ **Flammable products:** propane tanks and other compressed gas cylinders, kerosene, home heating fuel, diesel fuel, gas/oil mix, lighter fluid
- ➔ **Miscellaneous:** batteries, mercury thermometers or thermostats, fluorescent light bulbs, driveway sealer

## Don't know where to recycle?

**The following phone numbers and websites may help:**

Nevada Department of Environmental Protection Recycling Hotline: (800) 597-5865 or <http://ndep.nv.gov/recycl/hotline.htm>.

Earth 911: (877) EARTH911 or <http://nevada.earth911.org/usa/master.asp>. Enter your ZIP code for local information.

**Most toxic substances include disposal instructions on the label.** Always read and follow the directions. For more information, access the Internet and search for the product name or manufacturer. Contact the manufacturer for disposal information.

## For more information:

Contact the NEMO Project,  
c/o Susan Donaldson, Ph.D.  
University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension  
5305 Mill St.  
Reno, NV 89502

Tel: (775) 784-4848

Fax: (775) 784-4881

### Internet:

[www.unce.unr.edu/NEMO](http://www.unce.unr.edu/NEMO)

## Funding provided by:

Nevada Division of  
Environmental Protection,  
Nonpoint Source Pollution  
Management branch &  
United States Environmental  
Protection Agency.



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