

FACT SHEET



Federal Emergency Management Agency

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS IN THE HOME

Nearly every household uses products containing hazardous materials. Although the risk of a chemical accident is slight, knowing how to handle these products and how to react during an emergency can reduce the risk of injury.

Contact authorities on hazardous household materials, such as the American Red Cross or the Environmental Protection Agency, for information about potentially dangerous household products and their antidotes. Ask about the advisability of maintaining antidotes in your home for:

- Cleaners and germicides
- Deodorizers
- Detergents
- Drain and bowl cleaners
- Gases
- Home medications
- Laundry bleaches
- Liquid fuels
- Paint removers and thinners

Store household chemicals according to the instructions on the label.

Read instructions on how to dispose of chemicals properly. Small amounts of the following products can be safely poured down the drain with plenty of water:

- Antifreeze
- Bathroom and glass cleaner
- Bleach

- Drain cleaner
- Fertilizer
- Household disinfectant
- Laundry and dishwashing detergent
- Rubbing alcohol
- Rug and upholstery cleaner
- Toilet bowl cleaner

Small amounts of the following products should be disposed by wrapping the container in newspaper and plastic and placing it in the trash:

- Brake fluid
- Car wax or polish
- Dish and laundry soap
- Drain cleaner
- Fertilizer
- Furniture and floor polish
- Insect repellent
- Nail polish
- Oven cleaner
- Paint thinners and strippers
- Pesticides
- Powder cleansers
- Toilet bowl cleaner
- Water-based paint
- Wood preservatives

Dispose of the following products at a recycling center or a collection site:

- Kerosene
- Motor or fuel oil
- Car battery or battery acid
- Diesel fuel
- Transmission fluid
- Large amounts of paint
- Thinner or stripper
- Power steering fluid
- Turpentine
- Gun cleaning solvents
- Tires

Disposing of Medicines and Spray Cans

Flush medicines that are no longer being used or that are out-dated down the toilet and place the empty container in the trash.

Empty spray cans by pressing the button until nothing comes out and then place the can in the trash. Do not place spray cans into a burning barrel, incinerator, or trash compactor because they may explode.

Keep fire extinguishers in home and car.

Post the number of the nearest poison control center by the telephone.

Learn to recognize the symptoms of toxic poisoning.

- Difficulty in breathing
- Irritation of the eyes, skin, throat, or respiratory tract
- Changes in skin color
- Headache or blurred vision
- Dizziness
- Clumsiness or lack of coordination
- Cramps or diarrhea

If there is danger of a fire or explosion, get out of the house immediately.

If there is a fire or explosion, call the fire department after you get out.

Stay away from the house to avoid the possibility of breathing toxic fumes.

Wash hands, arms, or other parts of the body that may have been exposed to the chemical.

Discard any clothing that may have been contaminated.

Administer first aid treatment to victims of chemical burns.

■ Call 9-1-1 for emergency help.

■ Remove clothing and jewelry from around the injury.

■ Pour clean, cool water over the burn for 15-30 minutes.

■ Loosely cover the burn with a sterile or clean dressing. Be sure that the dressing will not stick to the burn.

■ Refer victim to a medical professional for further treatment.

Eye Contact with a Hazardous Substance

If a hazardous substance comes in contact with an eye, it is important to take immediate action. Delaying first aid can greatly increase the likelihood of injury. Flush the eye with clear, lukewarm water for a minimum of 15 minutes. Continue the cleansing process even if the victim indicates he or she no longer is feeling any pain, then seek medical attention.