



# HOUSEHOLD CHEMICAL SAFETY

A Guide For Geauga County Landowners



## HOME SWEET HOME!

Hopefully most of us would never describe our homes as “hazardous,” but many of the products we use every day are actually toxic. Cleaners, paints, automotive fluids, batteries, and pesticides are just a few examples of products containing hazardous or toxic chemicals. Reading the product labels in just one room of your home (like your kitchen or bathroom) can prove to be enlightening yet frightening. Believe it or not, the average U.S. household accumulates as much as 100 pounds of hazardous waste in a year. So without realizing it, our ordinary home can become extraordinarily toxic.

A product is considered a hazardous waste if it contains ingredients that are potentially harmful to human health and the environment. Reading product labels is the first step to gaining a deeper understanding of their hazards.

Each year Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste and thousands of children die from chemicals improperly stored and used in the home.

### LABELS TELL US:

- The product ingredients
- The potential hazard of the product - TOXIC, IGNITABLE, CORROSIVE, and REACTIVE
- Warnings and signal words to identify the products toxicity level
  - **1. CAUTION** - mild hazard
  - **2. WARNING** - moderate hazard
  - **3. DANGER OR POISON** - extremely flammable, corrosive, or highly toxic
- Important directions regarding use, storage, and disposal of the product

### COMMON HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE CAN INCLUDE;

- Antifreeze
- Batteries
- Drain cleaners
- Electronic wastes
- Glue and adhesives
- Household cleaners
- Oven cleaners
- Paints
- Pesticides
- Pool cleaners
- Solvents
- Used oil
- Waste containing asbestos
- Waste containing mercury (thermometers, fluorescent lights)

## DISPOSAL DANGERS

Not all water pollution comes from big factories. It is also caused by little household chores. Each household can add up to one big hazardous waste problem. Like it or not, everything does go somewhere, even our toxic products. In fact, cleaning substances are the most common cause of home poisonings.

Basements, garages, kitchens, and closets across the country are home to a wide variety of potentially harmful materials whose improper disposal can have devastating, long-lasting consequences. By pouring these chemicals down the drain, into a storm sewer, on the ground, or even in the trash, we pollute the environment and endanger our health.

Tossing our hazardous household waste in the trash is by far the most common and damaging disposal method, causing soil and groundwater contamination, chemical reactions, and exposures. Hazardous household waste poured on the ground or down a storm sewer will infiltrate through the soil and end up in the nearest waterway, poisoning aquatic habitat and wildlife. Ultimately the health of our families and communities requires the understanding and responsible use of chemicals and products.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

- The first step in dealing with hazardous products is knowing what you already have. Take an inventory of your house, room by room, and read the labels. Consider safe storage strategies such as keeping products away from heat sources, out of reach of children and pets, and only in original containers.
- When using hazardous products, carefully follow instructions.
- If you find a hazardous product that you no longer want, either use it up or give it away. Give that half-used gallon of paint to a neighbor or donate it to a group like a high school or Habitat for Humanity.
- Still no luck? Contact your county's Solid Waste Management District for disposal and recycling options. Collection days and household hazardous waste recycling facilities keep toxics out of landfills and drinking water supplies.
- Consider making your own alternative cleaners. There are endless resources at your fingertips, now that everyone holds a computer in their pocket, to find clean and nontoxic ingredients for homemade cleaners.
- When you absolutely need to buy a hazardous product for a specific job, prevent leftovers! Avoid having leftover hazardous products by buying only what you need. Read labels, look for product certifications, and consider buying less toxic alternatives.

## ALTERNATIVE CLEANERS

**Drain Cleaner:** Clean clogged pipes with a snake or plunger. Sprinkle baking soda down drain, followed by white vinegar. Wait 15 minutes, flush with boiling water, then use plunger. Repeat if necessary until unclogged.

**Rug and Upholstery Cleaner:** Clean stain immediately with soda water and baking soda paste, then vacuum.

**Spot Remover:** Immediately soak in cold water, lemon juice, or club soda.

**Tub and Tile Cleaner:** Fill plastic flip-flop shaker bottle half full with baking soda and add 15 drops of pure essential lemon oil. Stir then fill rest of bottle with baking soda. Close lid and shake. Sprinkle onto surfaces and wipe with damp sponge. Rinse well.

**Cleaning Spray:** Fill 15 oz. spray bottle with equal amounts of white distilled vinegar and water. Add 20 drops of pure peppermint (or other) oil and shake to mix. Spray directly on surfaces and wipe clean.

**Glass Cleaner:** Use 2 tablespoons vinegar in 1 quart water and wipe glass with newspaper.

**Furniture Polish:** Put 2 teaspoons of olive oil into a 16 oz. spray bottle. Add 20 drops lemon essential oil, 1/4 cup white distilled vinegar, fill with purified water, and shake well. Spray on rag and wipe furniture clean.