



KY-A-Syst for the Home

Environmental Stewardship for Homeowners

Managing Hazardous Household Products

Why Should You Be Concerned?

Although you may not realize it, almost all households produce hazardous waste. Some household products contain ingredients threatening to health or the environment if not handled properly. For instance, vapors from paint thinner and other solvents can be hazardous to breathe. Products such as motor oil or pesticides, if disposed of onto the ground, may contribute to the pollution of your drinking water or a nearby stream. Even everyday personal care products like nail polish, shoe polish, spot removers, and mothballs are potentially hazardous. Keep in mind that you are responsible for the safe use, re-use, or disposal of any products in and around your home.

How Can KY-A-Syst Help?

This publication leads you through an evaluation of your home and property to determine pollution and health risks. After you have read this publication, walk around your home and property and answer the questions in the boxes, circling the answers that best apply. Your answers will help you become familiar with your use, storage, and disposal of hazardous household products and identify potential problems so you can reduce any health and environmental dangers.

If you answer all questions with choice A, you have few risks associated with hazardous household products. If you answer any questions with choice B, there may be a problem. If you answer any questions with choice C, you will want to consider making changes. Use the action checklist in this publication to help you. If you would like further help in assessing your management of hazardous household products, please contact your county office of the Cooperative Extension Service.



Some household products contain ingredients that threaten your health or the environment if not handled properly.

Product Selection

It is often difficult to find out which household products are hazardous, so it pays to learn as much as you can about a product and its potential hazards before purchasing it. Before you purchase or use a product, take the time to read the label, even the small print, because product labels contain important information and often indicate if a product could be hazardous. Look for signal words such as *caution*, *warning*, or *danger*. Products labeled DANGER, FLAMMABLE, POISON, VAPOR HARMFUL, or FATAL IF SWALLOWED may have ingredients that could cause environmental damage as well as health problems if used, stored, or disposed of improperly. Don't just read the product label, follow its directions.



Product labels provide details about how to safely use, store, and dispose of a product.

Do you read labels when buying and using hazardous household products?

- A. I always read labels, understand the signal words, and respect the possibility of hazards to health or the environment that the labels describe. I choose the least hazardous product for the job.
- B. I don't read labels or understand what they mean, but I am cautious when using a product.
- C. I never read labels. I purchase products without considering what the product is made of or its potential hazards.

How much of a particular product do you purchase?

- A. I buy only what is needed for the job. I use most of the product within a few months after purchase or give excess product to someone else to use.
- B. I buy excess product but provide safe and accessible storage.
- C. I buy more than I need and purchase additional product without checking current supplies.

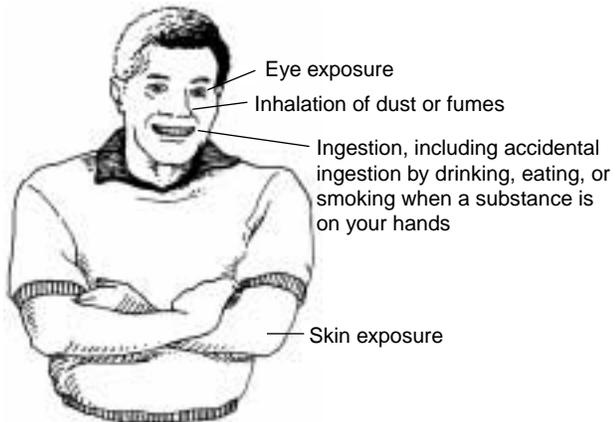
Don't Buy More Than You Need

If you buy more than you need, household products will accumulate and create storage problems. In addition, if unused for long periods, product containers may become damaged and leak, and they also may change chemically and not be effective when you finally try to use them. Some products, such as pesticides, may become restricted or banned after purchase, and safe and legal disposal becomes much more difficult. Avoid the problems described here by purchasing only what you need.

Use Hazardous Products Safely

If you do not follow product warnings and directions for use of household products, the chemicals in some of them can cause health problems, including irritated skin, watery eyes, burns—even cancer. You can be exposed to a product ingredient by ingestion, inhalation of dust or fumes, or contact with the skin or eyes. See the illustration below.

How You Can Be Exposed to a Hazardous Product

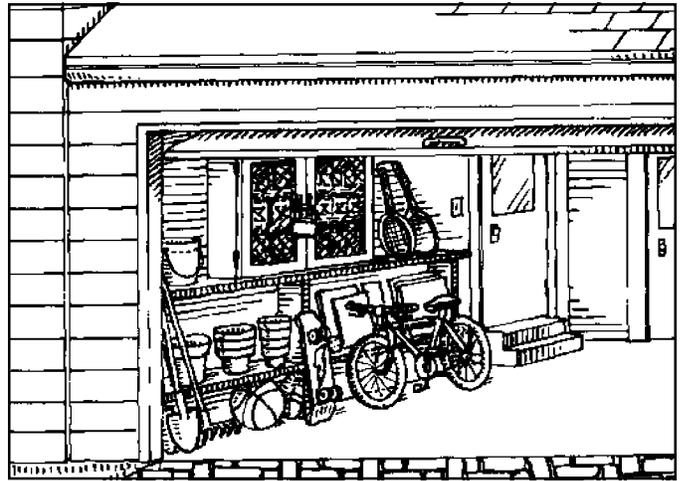


Protecting Children

Hazardous household products should be kept out of the reach of children and pets, in a locked cabinet or another inaccessible location. Do not store herbicides or other garden products in the garage where children store their bicycles or other outside toys.

Safe Containers, Safe Storage

Household products should be stored in their original containers and kept in a locked or secure area. Containers should be labeled clearly, tightly sealed, and kept dry. Keep products away from anything that could cause them to catch fire. Batteries and flammable chemicals, for example, should be stored in an area shaded from direct sunlight. Corrosives like acids or lye should be kept separate from other hazardous products to prevent dangerous chemical reactions. Make routine checks of storage areas to assure that containers are not leaking and that the sides of the containers are not bulging.



Hazardous products should be stored in a locked cabinet or other location inaccessible to children and pets.

How do you use hazardous products?

- A. I follow label instructions and take recommended precautions against exposure, such as good ventilation and use of safety goggles and gloves. I never mix products.
- B. I occasionally read label instructions, and I take some precautions. I occasionally mix products, but I always check safety precautions first.
- C. I never follow label instructions and take no precautions, even when recommended. If one product doesn't work, I add another without checking safety precautions.

Do children and pets have access to the hazardous products in your home?

- A. I store hazardous products in a locked cabinet or other location inaccessible to children and pets.
- B. I keep products out of the direct reach of children and pets but still accessible.
- C. My products are easily accessible to children and pets.

How safe are your storage locations and containers?

- A. I store leftover products in their original containers, properly sealed. Products are stored by type.
- B. I store original containers in a disorganized way, and I don't protect against leaks and spills.
- C. I transfer leftovers to other containers, and I store leftovers without caps or lids.

Ventilation

If you smell a stored household product, its lid could be loose. If there is not enough ventilation, the product's fumes could be harmful. Always follow the label directions for adequate ventilation.

Disposing of Leftover Hazardous Products

Disposal should be your last option, because it is wasteful. Also, if not carried out properly, disposal could be unsafe for you and the environment. You can avoid the disposal dilemma by:

- buying only what you need.
- using up leftover product.
- recycling.

Used motor oil and antifreeze, for example, are accepted for recycling in many communities at automobile repair shops.

If leftover products can be used by a neighbor or local organization, give them away. You will turn a potential problem into a money-saver for someone else. Some communities sponsor local swap programs or hazardous waste collection sites. For more information about programs in your community, contact your local sanitation department or the county office of the Cooperative Extension Service, or look in the phone book under recycling.

For More Information About . . .

- **Pesticide Container Recycling**
 - Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Division of Pesticides, Rinse & Return Recycling Program (call 502-564-7274).
- **Hazardous Waste Management**
 - Kentucky Division of Waste Management (call 502-564-6716).
 - *Dealing with Household Hazardous Waste* by William Murphy, Linda Heaton, and Kimberly Henken, University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service.
- **Alternatives to Hazardous Products**
 - *Hazardous Household Substances: Alternatives That Are Relatively Free of Toxic Effects* (HE4-904) reviewed and approved for use in the Cooperative Extension Service in Kentucky by Linda Reece Adler.
- **Paint Disposal**
 - *Paint Disposal the Right Way* (write for this free guide from the National Paint and Coating Association/1500 Rhode Island Ave., NW/Washington, DC 20005).
- **Battery Recycling**
 - Battery Recharging and Recycling Center for Kentucky (call 1-800-822-8837, code 1).

For a health emergency involving exposure to a hazardous household product, call the Kentucky Regional Poison Center, 800-722-5725 (Kentucky residents only). For the Louisville metro area, the number is 502-589-8222. In other states, check local listings.



Used motor oil and antifreeze are accepted for recycling in many communities.

How well ventilated are the places where you store hazardous products?

- A. I store volatile products in places with good ventilation.
- B. I don't pay attention to storage location, but each container is in good shape and tightly sealed.
- C. I store products in areas with poor ventilation such as basements or closets. Containers are left open or are damaged.

How do you dispose of leftover hazardous products?

- A. I share or recycle any unused products. I do not burn trash. I use other non-toxic alternatives whenever possible. I purchase only what I need.
- B. I dispose of leftover products in a community landfill or down the drain.
- C. I dump leftover products on the ground, near a waterway, or near a well. I burn my trash.



What Is the KY-A-Syst for the Home Program?

The KY-A-Syst for the Home program is a series of publications that can help you be a good environmental steward of Kentucky and protect the health and well-being of your family. KY-A-Syst for the Home publications provide problem-solving information and also list agencies that can provide help in specific areas.

Action Checklist

Look back at the assessment questions and make sure you have answered all questions. Record all B and C responses, and list the improvements or changes you plan to make. You can use recommendations from this publication or from other sources to help you decide on action you are likely to take. Write down a date to keep you on schedule. Read back through the assessment questions from time to time to see if any responses have changed, and take any action needed to address new concerns.

Write all B and C responses below.	What can you do to reduce risk?	Set a target date for action.
<i>Sample:</i> I transfer leftovers to other containers, and I store leftovers without caps or lids.	Leave all products in original containers for storage and be sure they are sealed tightly.	Each time a hazardous household product is used.

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