

Disposing of Household Hazardous Waste

The average household contains between three and ten gallons of materials that are hazardous to human health or to the environment. The improper disposal of household hazardous wastes can cause problems for the entire community. Wastes can be explosive or highly flammable. Sewers have exploded and garbage trucks have burned because people have carelessly discarded flammable or reactive wastes.

Household hazardous wastes can leak from landfills and contaminate groundwater and surface water or can enter the air we breathe through emissions from landfills and incinerators. Some wastes are poisonous to humans or wildlife, while others can cause cancer, birth defects, or other serious medical problems. Any water that flows into storm drains flows untreated into the Chesapeake Bay or one of its tributaries. Used oil, antifreeze, or other chemicals should not be dumped into storm drains.



It is important to learn about the products you use in your home, garden, and workshop and how to dispose of these products when they are no longer needed. Hazardous wastes are any materials that are flammable, explosive, toxic, corrosive, or irritating. Unused medication is a form of hazardous waste and should not be thrown in the trash. Other common household hazardous wastes include, paint, cleaning supplies, and automobile fluids. Use the County's hazardous waste recycling and disposal facilities to dispose of hazardous waste.

To reduce the amount of hazardous materials you use, find less hazardous substitutes, do not buy more than you need, and follow all directions on the packaging. Store your waste materials in their original containers until the waste can be disposed of properly to prevent leaking.

Where To Get Help for hazardous waste information

- Be sure to check out the next Cecil County Hazardous Waste Disposal Day;
http://www.ccgov.org/dept_works/SolidWasteDiv.cfm
- Waste Reduction; <http://extension.umd.edu/publications/Category.cfm?ID=L>
- Household Hazardous Waste;
<http://www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/muncpl/hhw.htm>
- Hazardous Waste;
<http://www.delawareestuary.org/pdf/HomeownersGuideSWMgmt.pdf>

Winter Deicing

When snow and ice pile up, salt is commonly used to speed up the melting process. However, salt can be harmful to the environment in high concentrations. Excess salt can destroy the structure of soil, causing it to erode more easily. High concentrations of salt can kill species of plants and aquatic life that are not tolerant of high concentrations. Salt can also leech through the soil, contaminating groundwater that becomes drinking water.



There are several alternatives to reduce that amount of salt needed for deicing. Alternatives include potassium chloride, calcium chloride, magnesium chloride, corn processing by-products, and calcium magnesium acetate (CMA). These afore mentioned alternatives can be found under several brand names, so be sure to read the labels.

Any alternative can be harmful when over applied. All of the alternatives are most effective when used in combination with salt. CMA is the most environmentally friendly alternative to salt. However, it is the most expensive, and effectiveness decreases when temperatures drop below 26 degrees Fahrenheit.



To reduce salting needs:

- Shovel sidewalks and driveways to reduce the ability of ice to build up.
- Take the temperature into consideration when determining which deicer will be most effective.
- Only apply deicers where necessary—on the most high traffic areas.
- Use sand for traction to reduce the amount of salt needed.

Where To Get Help for winter de-icing information

- Melting Ice Safely; <http://extension.umd.edu/publications/PDFs/FS707.pdf>
- Using Deicers Properly;
<http://www.friendsofrockcreek.org/WhatYouCanDo/UsingDeicersProperly/tabid/91/Default.aspx>
- Winter Weather, Chemical Deicers, and the Chesapeake Bay;
http://www.mde.state.md.us/assets/document/WINTER_2.pdf

Maintaining Your Vehicle

Vehicle maintenance is an important and easy way to reduce the amount of oil, heavy metals, and other toxic chemicals reaching our drinking water. After oil has leaked from a car onto a driveway, rainwater washes it into the street, toward the nearest drainage pipe. This water then flows to the nearest stream or river. It is estimated that 180 million gallons of oil are disposed of improperly each year. A single quart of oil can contaminate 250,000 gallons of drinking water.

Check your vehicle regularly for oil leaks and drips. If leaks or drips are found, fix them as quickly as possible. Use ground cloths or drip pans when leaks are found, while changing the oil, or when working on the engine. If a spill occurs while changing the oil or working on the engine, clean up the spills immediately and properly dispose of the clean up materials.



Image credit: Chesapeake Bay Drainage

<http://www.watershedactivities.com/projects/fall/sdstencl.html>



Image credit: Drains to Our Streams

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/nvswcd/stormdrained.htm>

Collect used oil in containers with tight fitting lids (i.e. plastic jugs). Be sure to recycle the oil in the proper locations. Auto supply stores, car care centers, and gas stations usually accept used oil. Do not mix waste oil with gasoline, solvents, or other engine fluids. If mixed the oil will become contaminated and will not be able to be reused. Motor oil, antifreeze, transmission fluid, or other engine fluids should never be dumped onto roads, down the storm drain or catch basin, onto the ground, or into a ditch.

Where To Get Help for vehicle maintenance information

- Vehicle Maintenance;
<http://www.dmv.org/how-to-guides/vehicle-maintenance.php>
- Top 10 Car Care Tips; <http://www.doityourself.com/stry/autocaretips>
- Vehicle Maintenance Tips;
http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/transportation/personal/vehicle_maintenance.cfm?attr=8

Impacts of Recreation on Natural Resources

As the demand for recreational opportunities rises, population increases, and available undeveloped areas shrink, the impacts of recreation on natural resources become more pronounced. In order to preserve the value of natural areas it is critical to evaluate the footprint that various forms of recreation leave on the environment. Areas used for recreational activities must be managed to minimize such impacts.



Signs like this one located at The Fair Hill Nature Center should be followed at all times to ensure minimal impacts in environmentally sensitive areas.

Recreational activities include hunting, fishing, hiking, backpacking, skiing, mountain biking, rock climbing, rafting and kayaking, bird watching, off-road vehicular travel, and cultural observations and explorations. Some recreational activities have more of an impact on the surrounding environment than others. Potential impacts include changes in water quality and surface flow, compaction and erosion of soil, non-native species introduction, and air and water pollution.

Many public recreation areas post information to help people apply responsible recreational practices. Some recreational clubs provide literature to ensure participants enjoy their favorite activities in a sustainable manner. The answers to many questions regarding responsible recreational practices can be answered using website sources like the ones listed below.



Trail widening has occurred where trail users have tried to avoid muddy places in the trail. When using trails hike or bike through muddy areas to prevent widening of the trail.

Where To Get Help for impacts of recreation on natural resources

- Recreational Impacts on Natural Resources; <http://cecilscd.com/edu.htm>
- Recreational Activities in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed; http://www.cbf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=exp_main
- Maryland State Parks and Forests: Outdoor Adventures; <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/outdooradventures>
- Leave No Trace; <http://www.lnt.org/programs/principles.php>