

Hazardous Waste

Before you Begin

Waste is considered to be hazardous if it exhibits one of the following properties - ignitability, corrosivity, toxicity or reactivity. The properties of these wastes make them potentially hazardous for humans and the environment. These wastes can either be by-products of manufacturing processes (as in devices like CFLs) or simply discarded commercial products, like cleaning fluids or pesticides.

These wastes can be found in different physical states - gaseous, liquids, or solids. It is important to be careful with hazardous waste as it is a special type of waste and should not be disposed off the ways we dispose by-products of our everyday life.

Do our households have hazardous wastes? Do we realise that the day-to-day chemicals we use at households are potentially hazardous in nature? Some of the chemicals used at homes are hazardous in nature, it is important to identify these and identify potential alternatives where possible.

What classifies as potential household hazardous wastes? There are many. The resources provided with the lesson plans will help identify some of these. It is important to first recognise a product as a potential hazardous waste. The resources provided in this lesson plan also help one understand the meaning and interpretation of these symbols. To start with it is important to know that hazard symbols on products have three parts (refer to reference chart under resources for more information):

1. the picture
2. the frame
3. the caution (signal) words underneath the image



POISON

Dangers of household hazardous products

- Mixtures of some hazardous products can produce dangerous vapours, explosions or fires.
- Products containing acids can burn the skin, eyes or respiratory tract.
- Exposures to solvents and pesticides can cause nausea, headaches, convulsions, etc.
- Repeated exposures to chemicals can cause cancers.
- May cause incidences of poisoning in infants or pets.
- Environmental damage by pesticides - along with killing some pests, they also cause a lot of harm to other beneficial insects including butterflies.

It is thus imperative to reduce hazardous waste products at home

- Be a smart shopper and buy only what you require.
- Look at the product labels carefully and find out if there are less toxic alternatives.
- Follow all the safety instructions while handling the product, while storing the same and also responsibly dispose it.
- Use alternative non-toxic home based products where possible.