



# Hurricane Irene & Flood Cleanup in New York: Dealing with Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)

## Fact Sheet

### **What types of HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE might be in my home?**

#### **Household Cleaners**

Ammonia-based cleaners; oven and drain cleaners; floor care products; aerosol cleaners; window cleaners; furniture polish; metal polishes and cleaners; tub, tile, toilet bowl cleaners

#### **Paint & related products**

Latex-, water- and oil-based paint; turpentine paint stripper, rust remover, paint thinner, varnish

#### **Automotive Fluids & Batteries**

Used motor oil and filters; gasoline and diesel fuel; kerosene; auto body repair products; windshield washer solution; antifreeze; brake and transmission fluid; lead acid batteries; metal polish with solvent

#### **Lawn & Garden-care Products**

Bug spray; fertilizer; pesticide/insecticide; fungicide; herbicide, weed killer

#### **Beauty Products & Medicines**

Alcohol-based lotions; isopropyl alcohol; medicine; nail polish and remover; hair relaxers; dyes and permanents; products in aerosol cans; sharps

#### **Miscellaneous**

Fluorescent lights; mercury thermometers; photographic chemicals; lighter fluids; shoe polish; fiberglass epoxy; swimming pool chemicals; moth balls; glue; mercury batteries

Hurricane Irene and resultant flood waters damaged many homes in New York State. If your home has been flooded, be aware of potential chemical hazards that may now exist within your home. Flood waters may have displaced or damaged containers of everyday items such as household cleaners, fertilizers, and pesticides. People can be exposed to dangerous chemicals when cleaning flooded homes and disposing of these flood-damaged household items.

### **What is HHW?**

Common household products that contain hazardous materials become **household hazardous waste**, or “**HHW**” when discarded. Typical HHW include paints, cleaners, oils, batteries, and pesticides. These products contain potentially hazardous ingredients that require special care when you dispose of them.

### **How do I get rid of my HHW?**

Certain types of HHW have the potential to cause physical injury to sanitation workers, contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets, and present hazards to children and pets if left around the house. Federal law allows disposal of HHW in the trash. However, many communities have collection programs for HHW to reduce the potential harm posed by these chemicals. In New York State, numerous municipalities have HHW programs. Prior to handling or transporting any hazardous materials, contact your local municipality for the most current information and disposal instructions. For a list of HHW programs in New York, visit <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8780.html>, or call 518-402-8678.

Read the product labels for disposal directions to reduce the risk of products exploding, igniting, leaking, mixing with other chemicals, or posing other hazards on the way to a disposal facility. Empty containers of HHW can pose hazards because of the residual chemicals that might remain.

## How do I protect myself and my family when cleaning?

- Be alert for leaking containers and reactive household chemicals, such as caustic drain cleaners and chlorine bleach.
- Keep children and pets away from HHW and spills in home until cleanup has been completed.
- Wear protective gear appropriate for the chemical being cleaned, such as gloves.
- Ventilate the area to be cleaned.
- Wash your hands with soap and warm, clean water.
- Wash all clothes worn during the clean up in hot water and detergent, and separate from uncontaminated clothes and linens. For more information, see <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/planning/personalcleaningfacts.asp>.
- For spills, thoroughly rinse the area several times with water and rags. Never use household brooms or mops to clean the spills since they will become contaminated and must be discarded.
- Contact local authorities for large spills and further guidance.
- Always properly dispose of HHW.
- For more information on protecting yourself during cleanup work, see <http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/cleanup/facts.asp> and <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/cleanupwater.asp>.

## What do I do if someone is hurt by chemicals?

- Seek immediate medical attention if you become injured or ill.
- If you suspect someone has been poisoned by a chemical, call 911 or the National Poison Control Center at 1-800-222-1222.
- If you suspect that a pet has been poisoned by a chemical, call the Animal Poison Control Center toll-free at 1-888-426-4435.

## What should I NOT do with my HHW?

- DO NOT mix HHW chemicals.
- DO NOT pour chemicals down the drains, sewers, or toilets.
- DO NOT burn chemicals.

**Improper disposal of HHW can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health.**

**For more environmental information, contact:**

**EPA: George Zachos, Regional Public Liaison – 888-283-7626 OR [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)  
NYDEC: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/8780.html> or 518-402-8678**

**For more health information please visit the following websites:**

**<http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/floods/>  
<http://emergency.cdc.gov/disasters/chemicals.asp>  
<http://www.nyalert.gov>**

**Or call NYS DOH Toll Free Helpline at 1-866-881-2809**

# Getting Rid of Cleaning Products and Other Chemicals

Local officials will tell you how to get rid of chemicals in your area.



! Don't mix chemicals.

! Don't put chemicals down drains, sewers, or toilets.



! Don't burn chemicals.

✓ Wash your skin if you get chemicals on it.

✓ Take off your clothes and wash them if chemicals get on them.



**Call 911 if someone is hurt by chemicals. You can also call the poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.**