

The Hazards of Household Hazardous Waste in New Jersey

The citizens of New Jersey generate more waste than the average US citizen, producing an estimated 6.4 lb./day of solid and hazardous waste. If not properly managed, these consumer waste products can and frequently do create environmental and public health hazards; contaminating ground and surface water, impacting septic systems, entering stormwater and causing fish kills, seriously injuring garbage/recycling collection and landfill employees and adding to the flammability and toxic effects of house fires. They also can harm residents directly, through unintended side-effects, improper use, or accidental poisoning. Local household hazardous waste programs provide the opportunity for these wastes to be recycled or disposed in environmentally appropriate ways.

Did you know, the first attempt to separate out HHW in the U.S. was sponsored by the League of Women Voters in Lexington, Massachusetts, in 1982. Since then about 2,900 collection days have been held in 46 states, and like you, managing HHW has become a full-time responsibility for communities across the nation.

Household hazardous waste (HHW) - such as oil-based paints, paint thinner, pesticides, used motor oil, antifreeze and strong cleaners can have adverse effects on the environment if they are discarded improperly. Communities see a growing trend of residents, disposing of their hazardous waste(s) by discarding it illegally.

Household chemicals pose many of the same hazards as Industrial Hazardous Wastes. Health and Safety should always be a priority during these events. In fact, you will see constant reminders posted on our job sites: hard hats, tools, and equipment, "Be Safe or Stop!".

In some ways, HHW may pose additional hazards at a collection event:

- They are often mixed in ways that they were not intend or anticipated- this can lead to reactions
- Homeowners do not often utilize the correct labeling and packaging that industry does as they do not understand the hazards

It is important to make sure containers are closed. Always be on the lookout for leaking bottles, do not move damaged containers. Spill containment should be readily available. Waste should always be labelled. Unknown material should not be accepted. Our employees are trained to watch for improperly or mis-labelled wastes. We have all been in a situation where a widow has a trunk full of her beloved husband's treasured chemicals. That is often the car we should really take extra caution offloading.

It is imperative that all field personnel wear the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Appropriate PPE should be utilized for the task:

Unloading/ Segregation/ Packing – Safety Glasses, Nitrile Gloves, Safety Shoes/ Boots (closed toe, gripping sole), Long Sleeve Shirt and Pants, Vinyl Apron/ Tyvek Suit (optional)

Traffic control is one of the most important elements for having a safe and successful collection event.

- Keep traffic moving at a SLOW controlled pace.
- Queue cars to unloading area and have them come to a complete stop.
- Ensure that vehicles do not stop too close together and crowd unloading area.
- Ask patrons to remain in vehicle and to put the car in park while materials are unloaded.
- Make sure the vehicle behind you is stopped and the driver aware of your presence before going to the trunk area to off load.
- When finished unloading ask that patrons depart SLOWLY
- Vehicles with large volumes or unacceptable materials may need to be moved to a separate area to address issues.

Some of the things we look for when unloading a car:

- Unload at a controlled but steady pace. Work quickly but do not rush.
- Be alert for moving vehicles. Do not stand between cars coming and going.
- Be aware of dirty gloves when opening car doors and trunks.
- Take care when removing materials from vehicles. Be alert for leaking or open containers, broken handles, spills, etc.

- Look for unlabeled or unidentified containers. Ask patrons what is in the containers. **Do not** accept waste which cannot be identified.
- Look for unacceptable materials. Leave unacceptable materials in the vehicle. We will always alert the Site Manager if these items are encountered.

HHW events and services help our communities, our environment, and our residents.

Great note received from our friends at Gloucester County:

“I wanted to take some time today to express my sincere gratitude for the outstanding job you and your staff did for Gloucester County Residents this past Saturday. We processed 678 cars in 6 hours as well as 5 towns and 4 schools. That is above our average per event. The number may not seem overly high compared to some counties, but almost every car came in loaded, so your crew had a lot of material to move in a short amount of time. Everyone was extremely respectful to not only me, but all the residents as they came through line. I received a large number of compliments from various residents on how efficient we were despite the amount of material that came in that day.”

- Gloucester County: Recycling/HSW Coordinator

If you need further assistance in setting up your HHW event, and are looking for some direction:

- ACV Enviro | 201-921-0164 or email Kelly Menzel KMenzel@ACVEnviro.com

