



## Inventory of Hazardous Substances in the Home

Have you ever conducted a survey of hazardous substances in your home? It may surprise you just how many hazardous substances you have accumulated. Even those products that seem otherwise benign can quickly become hazardous when misused or accidentally ingested. Answer the following questions based on your situation. Once you have an idea of the hazardous substances in your home, refer to the table for advice on managing and reducing their use.

### Inventory Questions

#### Hazardous Substance

According to the EPA, a hazardous substance is any material that poses a threat to human health and/or the environment. Typical hazardous substances are toxic, corrosive, ignitable, explosive, or chemically reactive.

1.) What hazardous substances are found in your home?

Examples include:

- a. **Cleaning Products:** Oven cleaners, drain cleaners, wood and metal cleaners and polishes, toilet cleaners, tub, tile, shower cleaners, bleach (laundry), pool chemicals
  - b. **Automotive Products:** Motor oil, fuel additives, carburetor and fuel injection cleaners, air conditioning refrigerants, starter fluids, automotive batteries, transmission and brake fluid, antifreeze
  - c. **Lawn and Garden Products:** Herbicides, insecticides, fungicides/wood preservatives
  - d. **Indoor Pesticides:** Ant sprays and baits, cockroach sprays and baits, flea repellents and shampoos, bug sprays, houseplant insecticides, moth repellents, mouse and rat poisons and baits
  - e. **Workshop/Painting Supplies:** Adhesives and glues, furniture strippers, oil or enamel based paint, stains and finishes, paint thinners and turpentine, paint strippers and removers, photographic chemicals, fixatives and other solvents
  - f. **Flammable Products:** Propane tanks and other compressed gas cylinders, kerosene, home heating oil, diesel fuel, gas/oil mix, lighter fluid
  - g. **Miscellaneous Products:** Batteries, mercury thermostats or thermometers, fluorescent light bulbs, driveway sealer
- 2.) How are you storing your hazardous substances? Are any containers leaking? Are chemicals stored in their original container? If not, are the containers properly labeled?
- 3.) What alternatives to hazardous substances do you use?
- 4.) Do you use personal protective equipment (goggles, gloves, face mask, etc.) suggested by the manufacturer when using hazardous substances?
- 5.) How do you dispose of hazardous substances?



### Elemental Mercury

Mercury is a heavy metal that can accumulate in the environment and is highly toxic if inhaled or swallowed. Elemental mercury, also known as quicksilver, is a shiny, silvery-white metal.

- 6.) Where is mercury found in your home?
- 7.) Do you use compact fluorescent light bulbs? (These bulbs contain small amounts of mercury.)
- 8.) How do you store items containing mercury?
- 9.) How do you dispose of mercury and mercury-containing materials?

### Pesticides

A pesticide is a substance or mixture thereof intended for preventing, destroying, repelling, or mitigating any pest. A pest is an insect, rodent, nematode, fungus, weed or other form of terrestrial or aquatic plant or animal life that is injurious to health or the environment.

- 10.) How do you use pesticides in and around your home?
- 11.) Do others apply pesticides in and around your home? If so, are they certified to do so?
- 12.) How do you store unused pesticides?
- 13.) How do you dispose of unused pesticides?
- 14.) Do you use alternatives to chemical pesticides for controlling pests?

## **Take Action to Properly Manage and Reduce Hazardous Substances**

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Know your terms! Read the label!

**POISON** means highly toxic

**DANGER** means poisonous or corrosive.

**WARNING** means moderately hazardous.

**CAUTION** means least hazardous.

**NON-TOXIC** typically means non-toxic for humans, but it may still be toxic to the environment.

**IGNITABLE** means capable of burning or causing a fire

**CORROSIVE** means capable of eating away materials and destroying living tissue when contact occurs

**EXPLOSIVE** means can cause an explosion or release poisonous fumes when exposed to air, water, or other chemicals

**TOXIC** means poisonous, either immediately (acutely toxic) or over a long period of time (chronically toxic)