

Emergency Preparedness Pointers

Household Hazardous Materials

Chemicals are an important part of our environment. Even though we often don't think about it, we use chemicals every day. They help us keep our food fresh and our bodies clean. They help our plants grow, keep us safe from harmful insects and fuel our cars. Chemicals make it possible for us to live longer, healthier lives.

When many people think of chemicals, they think of the types of substances used in many manufacturing processes, however, chemicals are found everywhere – in our kitchens, medicine cabinets, basements, bathrooms and garages. In fact, most chemical accidents happen in the home. Most are the result of improper use, improper storage or improper disposal of an otherwise helpful chemical. These types of accidents can easily be prevented.

Buying

Consider the following tips when buying household chemical products:

- ❖ Read directions and all health warnings – if you have pets, make sure that product is safe to use around animals.
- ❖ Try to find the *least* hazardous product.
- ❖ Purchase child-resistant substances and packaging.
- ❖ Use multipurpose cleaners to limit the number of items stored.
- ❖ Buy only what you need.



Storing

Consider the following tips when storing household chemical products:

- ❖ Store products tightly in original containers so that you can easily identify the contents and refer back to the directions and precautions.
- ❖ Regularly check containers for wear and tear and possible leakage.
- ❖ Store materials in a cool, dark place.
- ❖ Separate incompatible products.
- ❖ Limit the amount of chemicals stored.
- ❖ Eliminate unused or unneeded supplies.
- ❖ Keep all household chemical products out of sight and reach of children.

Alternative Cleaning Products

Several non-hazardous materials are available for use in many cleaning and stain removal tasks. They include baking soda, cornstarch, lemon juice, soap & water, steel wool and vinegar - just to name a few. Give them a try!

Using

A large number of chemical accidents are the result of trying to improve the way a product works by adding one substance to another, or not following the directions/precautions on the label.

- ❖ Avoid mixing common household chemical products. Some combinations of products, such as ammonia and bleach, create toxic gases.
- ❖ Always read and follow the directions. Some products should not be used in confined spaces to avoid inhaling dangerous vapors, while others should not be used without gloves or eye protection to avoid physical contact.
- ❖ Use only the amount indicated.
- ❖ Avoid splashing.
- ❖ If you're unable to open a window to increase ventilation, take frequent breaks for fresh air.
- ❖ If you are an expectant mother, check with your doctor before using chemical products.
- ❖ Never smoke while using any household chemical.

Disposing

There are several ways you can dispose of hazardous household products. Options include using the entire supply, recycling unused portions, taking unused supplies to a household collection event or donating unused supplies to a local group or organization that may have a need for them. For more information about local collection near you and the Ada County Household Hazardous Material Recycling Program, call: 853-1008, or within Boise City, contact the Hazardous Materials Program Coordinator at 384-3983

