

Hazardous waste

Hazardous wastes are wastes or products that have the potential to harm humans or the environment, either now or in the future. There are many options to help you dispose of household hazardous wastes safely, protect the environment and keep your home safe. Recycling programs are available for some hazardous wastes.

Over the last two decades, there have been major changes to the way Australians manage their waste. Recycling has increased but so has the amount of waste we are generating, including the quantity of hazardous waste.

Household hazardous waste

The average Australian household stores many hazardous substances or products that contain harmful elements. It can be dangerous to dispose of hazardous wastes through regular rubbish collections. Examples of household hazardous waste include:

- Solvent-based paints
- Pesticides and other garden chemicals
- Batteries (for example car, mobile phone or regular household batteries)
- Motor oils (for example from cars or mowers)
- Petrol and kerosene
- Cleaning and polishing chemicals
- Swimming pool or spa bath chemicals
- Pharmaceuticals (all medicines)
- Obsolete computer equipment
- Thermometers, barometers, thermostats, fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent globes (CFLs).

Handling and storage suggestions

To handle hazardous waste at home safely you should:

- Keep the goods in their original containers if possible. If containers are leaking, use new containers but never use food containers like soft drink bottles.
- Don't mix chemicals when decanting a substance into a new storage container.
- Make sure all labels, including warning labels and manufacturer's instructions, remain intact on the packaging.
- Store goods upright with lids secured tightly and out of the reach of young children.
- Keep all ignition sources, such as matches, well away from the storage area.
- Keep the storage area cool and dry.
- Buy the smallest amount for your needs.

How to dispose of hazardous waste

Always store hazardous wastes properly while waiting for a suitable disposal method. There are various schemes in Victoria to recycle and dispose of household hazardous waste. For example:

- **Computers** – materials used to make computer equipment contain valuable resources that can be re-used. They also contain hazardous materials that could pose a threat to the environment if they are not disposed of in a responsible manner. In Victoria, unwanted computer equipment – monitors, keyboards, laptops, CD and disc drives – can be recycled through the *Byteback* scheme. Some councils and equipment manufacturers also provide a disposal service for unwanted computers and equipment. Contact your local council or equipment manufacturer for details.
- **Mobile phones and phone batteries** – some mobile phones and accessories contain heavy metals. Mobile phone retailers, some banks and other retail stores will accept used mobile phones for recycling as part of *MobileMuster*, the mobile phone industry recycling program.
- **Rechargeable batteries** – batteries can be taken to *Detox your home* collections and some permanent sites or to one of a small number of *Batteryback* or company-owned retail locations.
- **Car batteries** – these are collected at many council waste transfer stations, landfills and some major battery retailers. Contact your local council.
- **Gas cylinders (LPG)** – these include cylinders used for BBQs, patio heaters, caravans, camping and lamps. These cylinders can be returned through swap programs provided by retailers for replacement, refilling or disposal. Charges may apply in some instances.
- **Used motor oils** – these can be recycled. There are over 100 motor oil collection points at transfer stations across Victoria. You can return a maximum of 20 litres of motor oil per visit. Contact your local council or use the *Oil directory*.
- **Laser and printer inkjet cartridges** – these can be taken to Australia Post and Harvey Norman outlets for recycling.
- **Fluorescent tubes and compact fluorescent globes (CFLs)** – fluorescent lamps and other mercury products, including mercury spills, can be taken to *Detox your home* collections, selected retail outlets and some permanent sites.
- **Plastic shopping bags** – supermarkets have collection bins for used plastic shopping bags for recycling. Plastic shopping bags create an ugly litter problem if not recycled or disposed of properly. If these bags get into waterways, they may be a threat to wildlife.
- **Unused medicines** – take unused pharmaceuticals, including prescription and non-prescription drugs, to a pharmacist for disposal through the *Return of Unwanted Medicines* program. Always store unused pharmaceuticals out of reach of children before you dispose of them.

Contact details for these services are listed in the **Where to get help** section.

The Detox your Home household chemical disposal service

Sustainability Victoria operates a mobile *Detox your home* service, which collects household chemicals for safe, responsible disposal or recycling. This service is delivered in collaboration with local government.

The service moves around the State. Collection events are run on weekends. Items accepted for recycling and disposal at *Detox Your Home* mobile events are:

- Empty aerosol cans
- Insect spray
- Floor-care products
- Kitchen and bathroom cleaners
- Ammonia based cleaners
- Pharmaceuticals
- Nail polish and remover
- Fluorescent tubes
- Batteries
- Fuels
- Gas cylinders
- Paints
- Fertiliser
- Weed killer
- Rat poison
- Pool chemicals
- Solvents and glues
- Paint stripper
- Engine oil
- Coolant and antifreeze

- Mobile phones
- Fire extinguishers
- Old car batteries
- Car wax
- Brake fluid
- Transmission fluid
- Car body filler.

Sustainability Victoria has also established a network of permanent drop-off centres at local transfer stations. These centres are available during transfer station operating times. These centres **ONLY** accept paint, motor oil, batteries, fluorescent tubes and, in most cases, gas cylinders.

Detox your Home does not accept:

- Containers larger than 20 litres or 20 kilograms
- Chemicals for uses other than household purposes
- Chemicals used for farm, commercial or industrial purposes
- Waste asbestos.

Disposing of industrial or farm chemicals

To dispose of industrial waste and asbestos:

- Check the *Yellow Pages* for waste reduction and disposal services.
- Go to the EPA website for a list of licensed companies that receive certain types of industrial waste.

What happens when you DON'T dispose of dangerous waste properly

You should never put hazardous household wastes into regular rubbish collections, tip it down the sink, toilet or gutters, or bury it in the ground. This is what can happen if you **don't** use correct disposal methods:

- **Buried in the garden** – dangerous chemicals and poison can leach into the surface or groundwater. This can affect the soil, plants and water for a long time.
- **Tipped down the sink** – wastes may corrode the pipes or block stormwater drains and cause problems at water treatment plants.
- **Put into the regular garbage** – this can put the health and safety of garbage collection workers at risk. It may also pollute waterways and drinking water if sent to normal landfills. Hazardous waste should only be stored in specially designed landfills.
- **Plastic shopping bags** – these can create an ugly litter problem if not recycled or disposed of properly. If these bags get into waterways, they may be a threat to wildlife. Most supermarkets now collect plastic bags for recycling.

Illegal disposal, dumping or misuse of wastes is a serious offence and subject to large financial penalties.

Where to get help

- Your local council
- Sustainability Victoria Tel. 1800 353 233
- **Gas cylinders** – most bottle gas retailers and service stations provide a swap service for empty or unwanted gas bottles
- Batteryback Tel. 1800 353 233 – for your nearest location to recycle batteries
- Byteback Tel. 1800 353 233 – to find your nearest computer recycling scheme
- Detox your home Tel. 1800 353 233 – to find your closest drop-off point for household chemicals
- Environment Protection Authority Tel. (03) 9695 2722 – to dispose of industrial waste
- Mobile muster Tel. 1300 730 070 – for your nearest location to recycle mobile phones
- Oil directory Tel. 1800 982 006 – for locations to recycle oils
- Returnedmed – for information about returning unwanted medications

- xxxChemclear Tel. 1800 008 182 – to dispose of farm chemicals

Things to remember

- The average Australian household stores many hazardous substances.
- Do not dispose of hazardous wastes through regular rubbish collections.
- There are many opportunities to recycle and dispose of household hazardous wastes safely.

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Sustainability Victoria

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