



Reducing the Impact of Flooding - Household Hazardous Waste

Department fact sheet

06/2011

When Flooding is Inevitable

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources urges citizens in flood-prone areas to remove or secure household chemicals and household hazardous waste properly to avoid safety and environmental problems in the event of local flooding. Products labeled with words such as POISON, DANGER, WARNING or CAUTION contain hazardous chemicals. Examples of such products are cleaning products, drain cleaners, pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, solvents, oil-based paint and fuels. These wastes, commonly referred to as household hazardous wastes, should be separated from other wastes before disposal whenever possible. These products may cause serious health problems and can potentially affect drinking water supplies.

Unlike other natural disasters that strike Missouri (e.g. tornadoes), severe flooding can usually be predicted, giving those in the affected areas the opportunity to prepare. One important form of preparation is to take steps to minimize the health, safety and environmental effects household chemicals and household hazardous wastes would have if exposed to flood waters.

In addition to household chemicals and household hazardous wastes, it is important to take steps to secure agricultural chemicals as well as propane and other fuel tanks including used oil containers. Additional information related to securing and preparing propane tanks is available in the department's fact sheets, *Reducing the Impact of Flooding – Propane Tanks* and *Reducing the Impact of Flooding – Agricultural Chemicals*.

Before the storm or flood:

If possible:

- Remove household chemicals and household hazardous wastes from the potential flood zone;
- Do not dump unwanted or expired chemicals down drains, storm sewers or toilets. Dispose of these household chemicals and household hazardous wastes at either a household hazardous waste collection program or with other household wastes in a permitted solid waste transfer station or sanitary landfill.

If it is not possible to remove household chemicals and household hazardous wastes from the flood zone:

- Store items in waterproof containers and seal tightly with tape.
- Label waterproof containers with a waterproof marker so that items can be readily identified.
- Place waterproof containers in the highest location possible such as upper cabinet shelves, top floors or attics.

After the storm or flood:

- Disasters may leave behind damaged household chemicals.
- Use extreme caution when cleaning up damaged containers and chemicals. Wear rubber gloves, avoid breathing any fumes or dust and only work in well-ventilated areas.
- Do not combine products. Household hazardous wastes should be separated from other wastes before disposal, if possible.
- Do not dump chemicals down drains, storm sewers or toilets.
- **For your own safety, do not burn these materials as they may produce toxic smoke.**

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources encourages counties and municipalities to use household hazardous waste collection programs for disposing of these wastes. Check with your local government officials and use a household hazardous waste collection program if one is available in your area. If a collection program is not available, this waste may be disposed of with other household waste in a permitted solid waste transfer station or sanitary landfill.

To report an environmental emergency, including fuel spills, please contact the department's spill line at 573-634-2436.

For More Information

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
PO Box 176
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0176
800-334-6946 or 573-751-3443
dnr.mo.gov