

Proper Chemical Storage Prevents Damage to Waterways

Improper disposal or storage of household chemicals such as paints, cleaners, solvents, or fuel can allow these chemicals to impact the health of your local waterways. Pouring excess chemicals on the ground or into storm sewers, using unsuitable containers, placing liquids near drains without a secondary container, or storing any chemical directly on the ground or in areas that may flood can provide pathways for chemicals to enter the stormwater system. While individual leaks may be small, household chemicals are common and collectively over time they can impact the health of your local streams, rivers, ponds, and lakes.

Proper chemical storage is easy to do. Try to buy only the necessary amount of needed household chemicals to avoid excess. For excess or chemicals needed on hand, read the labels and familiarize yourself with potential hazards or special storage instructions. Once you understand any special requirements, select a location that is not exposed to the elements, directly on the ground, near a drain, or prone to flooding. Then use the following storage guidelines:

- Check chemical labels for warnings regarding potential interactions with other chemicals and separate appropriately.
- Flammable chemicals should not be stored near a heat source.
- Keep chemicals in the original container with the lid or cap tightly sealed.
- Label pesticides, herbicides, insecticides, or fuels with the purchase date and use older chemicals first.
- Store liquid chemicals on a lower shelf and dry chemicals above.
- Place chemicals in a secondary storage container such as a plastic bin or drip pan.
- Whenever a chemical is needed, take a few moments to check other containers for leaks.
- And finally, make sure that hazardous chemicals are in locked cabinets to containers and out of the reach of children if necessary.

If appropriate (bulk detergents) or if the original container fails, repackaging may be necessary. If so, select a clean container appropriate for the chemical. Do not use food or drink containers and make sure to clearly label the contents and date on the new container. Alternatively, excess chemicals and containers can be disposed of following labeled guidelines, by contacting your local waste disposal service or municipality, and for engine or vehicle fluids or chemicals a service station or garage. Finally, remember to never dump household chemicals on the ground, down storm or sink drains.