

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE 5/10/07

This column is being initiated and coordinated by the Hingham League of Women Voters, as a public service, to inform the local townspeople of a variety of issues and constructive actions that may be taken to address various environmental concerns. The following article was contributed by Marianne MacDonald. Marianne is a member of Hingham's Long Range Waste Disposal and Recycling Committee.

Much of what we see in the popular press focuses on the benefits of recycling as a preferred waste management option. In fact, the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (US EPA) preferred hierarchy is Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Proper disposal. While proper disposal is at the bottom of the hierarchy, that does not diminish its importance in protecting our environment.

According to the US EPA, Americans generate 1.6 million tons of household hazardous waste (HHW) per year, and the average home can accumulate as much as 100 pounds of HHW in basements, garages and storage closets. Some types of HHW can contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets, and present hazards to children and pets if left around the house.

To help citizens dispose of this waste safely and properly, the Hingham Department of Public Works and South Shore Recycling Cooperative sponsor a Household Hazardous Waste Disposal Day each year. This year's event is to be held from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, May 19th at Plymouth River School, 200 High Street in Hingham. This event is free to Hingham residents with proof of residency.

Wondering what types of waste are considered hazardous? Regular household items which are considered hazardous consist of the following: Mercury, including thermometers and thermostats; cleaners for drains, ovens, toilets, shower/tubs; Moth balls and crystals; wood and metal cleaners and polishes; mouse and Rat baits and poisons, acids and bases; hobby and artist supplies; paint and furniture strippers and thinners; photography chemicals; fiberglass resins; adhesives and asbestos – which you must call ahead for this)

Items you may have in your garage or shed that are considered hazardous include: Flammable liquids and aerosols; gasoline, motor oil mixtures, automotive fluids, tire and carburetor cleaners; degreasers; marine and auto paints; pesticides, herbicides, fungicides and insecticides; fertilizers containing pesticides; pool chemicals; cesspool cleaners and wood preservatives.

Take some time to take inventory of these items in your home. All materials brought to HHW day must have labels. Note that latex paint is not considered hazardous. If you can not find a place to donate latex paint, it may be disposed of at the transfer station if it is dried.

Some materials that are not accepted are: industrial waste radioactive materials, pathological and medical waste, pressurized gas cylinders, lead acid (automotive) batteries

and explosives. Smoke detectors may be disposed in trash

Those interested in learning of non-hazardous substances they could use for regular cleaning to reduce the toxicity of the waste generated by their household, please check out the US EPA's website at www.epa.gov/epaoswer/non-hw/reduce/catbook/alt.htm.

The league welcomes input and information on any issues of "Green Concern" and invites you to contact us through e-mail at greencorner@hingham.ma.lwvnet.org. For membership information go to www.hingham.ma.lwvnet.org.