

## Community concern or issue: *Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)* improper disposal

### How does this issue impact citizen health or the environment?

Leftover household products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients are considered to be “household hazardous waste” or HHW. Products such as paints, cleaners, oils, batteries, fluorescent light bulbs, electronics, and pesticides contain these types of hazardous ingredients and require special care when you dispose of them. Improper disposal of HHW can include pouring them down sanitary drains (sink or toilets), onto the ground, or into storm sewers; or putting them out with the trash. Improper disposal of these wastes can pollute the environment and pose a threat to human health.

In addition, consumer electronics such as televisions and other video equipment, computers, assorted peripherals, audio equipment, and phones contain lead, cadmium, mercury, and other hazardous materials that are being disposed. Over 3 million tons of e-waste was disposed in the U.S. in 2007—41.1 million desktops and laptops and 31.9 million computer monitors. Of this amount, only 410,000 tons, or 13.6%, was recycled, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

### Existing controls or standards

Current laws do not mandate how citizens must dispose of household hazardous waste; however, some waste management companies will not pick up HHW materials—especially those that are liquid. Currently, liquids are prohibited in landfills. The Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) is a federal law that created the framework for the proper management of hazardous and non-hazardous waste; however, both of these (hazardous and non-hazardous waste laws) only deal with HHW management at the collection site.

### How is this issue impacting Salina?

According to Salina water department data, there are more than

18,000 households in Salina. (This does not include commercial or industrial use.) The Salina Hazardous Waste Facility reported in 2008 that 88,750 pounds of HHW was collected from 3,364 people, with an average of 26 pounds per drop-off visit; 31% of the waste was reusable paint and 3.5% was from batteries; 69% of the HHW collected was reused (31%) or recycled (38%). The remaining waste was transported to hazardous waste treatment, storage, or disposal facilities under strict regulations. Salina has a HHW collection site and a very beneficial HHW program; however, the Salina collection site is underutilized by the community, which means more HHW is being disposed inappropriately, resulting in more toxic materials in the environment.

### What factors and behaviors contribute to this problem?

Despite efforts by the HHW program, citizens are still unaware of this service. Hours available for drop off are limited and may discourage some from using this service. Citizens may not realize the threat to human health and environment that these materials may pose.

### Potential solutions – how can the community help with this issue?

Household hazardous waste should be disposed properly through approved collection sites. Citizens can reduce their need for products that contain corrosive, toxic, ignitable, or reactive ingredients by identifying a less hazardous material, by buying only what is needed so none will be left over to dispose, or by changing how they do things to eliminate the need for a hazardous product. An awareness campaign is needed to inform citizens of the many alternative, environmental friendly products that are available. Expanding the hours available for drop off at the city’s HHW facility may help prevent more household hazardous waste from entering our local landfill.

NOTE: This fact sheet was taken from an issue paper developed by Marilyn Marietta, Betsy Marietta, Stephanie Weckel.

The detailed fact sheet can be accessed at [www.sbeap.org/CARE](http://www.sbeap.org/CARE)