

Hazardous Waste

Hazardous Waste may be produced as a by-product of certain manufacturing operations. In addition, many commercial chemical products are regulated as hazardous waste once they are discarded or intended to be discarded. The Hazardous Waste Program of the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) is responsible for the regulation of hazardous waste in Maryland.

What is hazardous waste?

To be regulated as a hazardous waste, a substance must either have the potential to:

- cause or contribute to an increase in mortality or serious illness, or,
- threaten human health or the environment if mismanaged.

As a practical matter, a substance is regulated as a hazardous waste if it is specifically listed as such in State regulations, is mixed with or derived from one of those "listed" wastes, or exhibits certain characteristics defined in the regulations.

The characteristics of hazardous waste include ignitability, corrosivity (strong acids or caustics), reactivity (explosives or items which can release toxic gases when mixed with water), and toxicity (substances which will release certain levels of toxics when subjected to a test simulating conditions in a landfill).

What can be done with hazardous waste?

Some hazardous waste is recycled into usable products. Hazardous waste is also treated through chemical, biological or physical treatment to render it non-hazardous. It may also be incinerated or disposed of in a specially designed landfill.

What requirements apply to persons who generate hazardous waste?

Hazardous waste generators must arrange for shipment of their hazardous waste to a facility permitted to accept it or, with the appropriate permits, treat it themselves. A person who ships hazardous waste off-site must use a hauler certified by MDE and the waste must be accompanied by a document that tracks it from generation to disposal (the hazardous waste manifest). A person must comply with regulations on the storage of the waste, and must follow specified procedures to prevent the occurrence of circumstances which would threaten human health or the environment. These requirements are spelled out in Title 26, Subtitle 13 of the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR 26.13).

How does MDE check on compliance?

MDE inspectors make routine, unannounced inspections of hazardous waste generators and permitted hazardous waste facilities. Generator facilities found in violation of hazardous waste rules may be penalized under administrative or civil actions. Violations of hazardous waste laws in Maryland may be considered a felony and subject the violator to criminal sanctions, including imprisonment.

How do I report illegal activity concerning hazardous waste?

Contact the Hazardous Waste Enforcement Division at (410) 537-3400.

What is MDE doing to reduce the generation of hazardous waste?

Persons who generate hazardous waste are required by law to have a program in place to reduce the volume and toxicity of the hazardous waste they produce. The Hazardous Waste Program has a pollution

prevention/waste minimization group which assists generators who are attempting to reduce the amount of waste they create. They provide technical assistance and serve as a clearing house for information.

What about hazardous household products?

Persons should strive to minimize the amount of hazardous household waste they generate. Consideration should be given to purchasing less hazardous products. If a hazardous product must be used, only the amount needed for the job should be purchased.

Household waste is exempted from being regulated as hazardous waste. Nevertheless, it should not be disposed of indiscriminately. If you no longer have use for a hazardous product, try to find someone who can use it. Failing that, contact your county government to determine if they have a household hazardous waste collection day scheduled.

How can I get more information?

Call the Pollution Prevention/Waste Minimization Program for information on hazardous waste reduction (410) 537-3400.

For information on regulatory requirements associated with hazardous waste, call the Hazardous Waste Program at (410) 537-3345.