

Plan On It

A Dutchess County Planning Federation eNewsletter



April/May 2014

Reduce Pollution in Our Streams and Waterbodies

By Lindsay Carille, Deputy Commissioner of Solid Waste Management

Every April 22nd we celebrate Earth Day, which often gets people thinking about how they can be good stewards of the planet. Something as simple as how people choose to dispose of household items can contribute to a healthier environment every day of the year.

Please Don't Harm the Fish (or anyone else)

Most of us have wastes in our homes which have "warning," "hazardous," "poisonous," or "corrosive" on the label. This is a clear indicator that these products can be harmful to people, animals and our environment. If these same chemicals were generated by an industry, they would be subject to a regulatory program for hazardous waste management by state and federal authorities. Households, however, are exempt from regulations, even though household hazardous wastes (HHW) can be just as harmful.

According to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), every year an estimated 100,000 tons of HHW is dumped down drains or mixed with other wastes for curbside disposal. Improper storage and disposal of HHW can cause significant harmful effects. During transport, sanitation workers can be injured during collection, and fires and explosions can occur if incompatible HHWs are released in the collection truck. If dumped down a drain or deposited in a landfill, toxic liquids can contaminate waterbodies and our drinking water. Unfortunately, wastewater treatment plants and private wells are not designed to treat many of these chemicals that could get into the water supply, so it is very important to eliminate pollution at the source.



An assortment of hazardous items collected at a local household hazardous waste (HHW) collection event.

HHW Recycling Events in Dutchess County

Many communities around the state and country have organized programs to collect, package and transport HHW to hazardous waste treatment, storage, recycling or disposal facilities. In Dutchess County there are eight Household Hazardous Waste [collection events](#) every year, hosted by the Dutchess County Resource Recovery Agency (RRA) and partially funded by DEC. The events provide residents the ability to safely dispose of chemicals, pharmaceuticals (Poughkeepsie events only), electronics, and fluorescent bulbs.

Please Don't Medicate the Fish (or anyone else)

In the past, residents were told to flush unwanted and expired medications to ensure that they couldn't be accidentally ingested by children or pets. We now know that flushing can cause these largely unaltered drugs to enter into rivers and other waters.

According to the DEC, research has shown that continuous exposure to low levels of medications has altered the behavior and physiology of fish and aquatic life. Fortunately, Dutchess County has the best way to keep these medications out of the wrong hands and protect everyone, including the fish, through permanent pharmaceutical drop boxes and, ultimately, incineration. Residents can put prescription medicines, medicated ointments, over the counter medicines, pet medications, and inhalers in a sealed plastic bag and drop them off at five locations throughout the County or at the Household Hazardous Waste collection events held in Poughkeepsie. The medications are then safely and securely incinerated at the Dutchess County Resource Recovery Agency waste to energy facility.

Medication Disposal Drop Boxes

There are five [permanent drop boxes for medications](#) disposal, located at:

- Dutchess County Sheriffs Office*
- East Fishkill Police Dept.*
- Hyde Park Police Dept.*
- Village of Red Hook Police Dept.*
- NYS Police Troop K Headquarters

Medications should be put in a plastic bag before being placed in a drop box.

In 2013, over 1,000 pounds of medications were collected by the RRA and at these drop box locations.

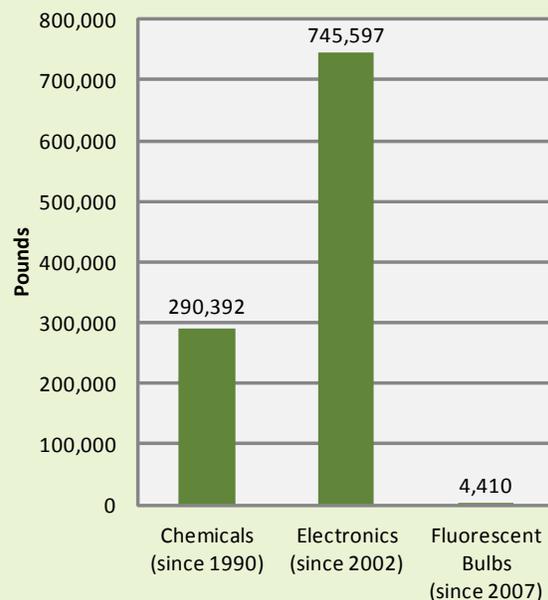
**Obtained and placed by the Dutchess County STOP-DWI program in conjunction with Local Law Enforcement.*

Household Electronics

Hazardous materials are also found in products without warning labels such as computers, cell phones, fluorescent bulbs, and rechargeable batteries. While they are not harmful to us when we use them, improper disposal can be hazardous to the environment. Most electronic waste, rechargeable batteries, and all cell phones are covered under [product stewardship](#) and can be returned to the retailer or manufacturer at no cost to the consumer.

With proper management the recyclable and reusable materials in electronics, such as metals, plastics and glass, can be recovered. According to the EPA, 2,200 pounds of computer circuit boards can contain 40 to 800 times the amount of gold and 30 to 40 times the amount of copper mined from 2,200 pounds of ore in the U.S. By recycling electronics we reduce greenhouse gas emissions, reduce

Household Hazardous Waste Collected at Dutchess County HHW Events



pollution, save energy, and save resources by extracting fewer raw materials from the earth. Yet, 2009 EPA figures show only about 38% of discarded computers are disposed of properly and recycled. Starting January 1, 2015 it will be illegal for NY State consumers to dispose of most electronics in their garbage.

Choose to Make a Difference

The best way to prevent toxins entering our environment from landfilling or incineration is to not throw hazardous materials in the garbage in the first place. Take your HHW, such as thermostats, fluorescents, lead batteries, computers, and lead based paints, to a HHW event or back to the retailer or manufacturer, and dispose of your medications at one of the secure drop-boxes located throughout the County. It's the safest thing to do.

More Information

[2014 Household Hazardous Waste Events in Dutchess County](#)

Medication Disposal Drop Boxes — [Info, Hours and Locations](#)

[Dutchess County Division of Solid Waste Management](#)

[Product Stewardship Institute](#)

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This newsletter was developed by the Dutchess County Department of Planning and Development, in conjunction with the Dutchess County Planning Federation.

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