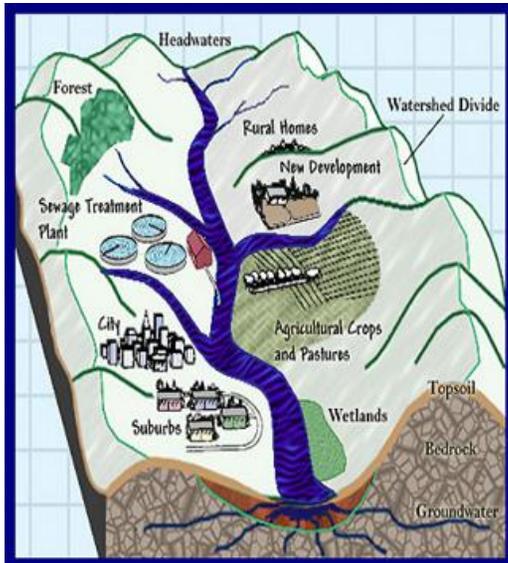


# What is a Watershed?

A watershed is all the land that drains to the same river or lake. Water travels from the highest points at the watershed edge to the lowest point at the bottom of the watershed. Wherever you are, you are in a watershed!

When it rains, some water travels over the land surface to the nearest stream or creek. This water is called surface runoff or stormwater. As the stormwater flows, it picks up any contaminants lying on the surface – pesticides and fertilizer from lawns, manure from farms, sediment from construction sites, and oil and gas from roads. Small streams join to form larger and larger rivers, until the water – and any contaminants it is carrying – reaches the final lake or river.

Some precipitation, instead of traveling over the land, will percolate into the soil and reach the groundwater. Similarly, the groundwater may pick up nitrates from failing septic systems, gasoline from leaky storage tanks, and industrial chemicals from improper dumping. The groundwater ultimately flows into one of the rivers or lakes in the watershed.



# Ways to Help

## What can you do?

- Dispose of motor oil at a garage that will recycle it. Never pour oil on the ground or in a storm drain or sewer on the street.
- Purchase alternative products that contain fewer hazardous ingredients.
- Use only as much as you need, and use up the product completely.
- Minimize the use of pesticides and herbicides on your lawn and garden. Use biodegradable products when available.
- Do not pour used or unused chemicals or paints down the drain or flush in the toilet.
- Use water-based paints if possible. Sweep up dust and paint chips from sanding or stripping activities.
- NEVER mix leftover chemicals with other materials.
- Make sure all chemicals are properly labeled and stored away from children and pets.
- Contact your county solid waste department for HHW and pharmaceutical collection events in your area.
- Remember: anything you throw or store on the ground can find its way into the groundwater. Store and handle chemicals properly.

## For more information

**Berks County Solid Waste Authority**  
<http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/SWA/Pages/default.aspx>

**Drinking Water Wise**  
[www.drinkingwaterwise.org](http://www.drinkingwaterwise.org)

**Pennsylvania Dept. of Environmental Protection**  
<http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/household/14079>

# HOMEOWNER GUIDE

## Proper Disposal of Household Hazardous Waste



**Reading Area Water Authority  
Source Water Protection Program**

## For more information

Reading Area Water Authority  
1801 Kutztown Road  
Reading, PA 19604  
(610) 406-6300



## Remember, it's not just toxic to you!

Did you know that many household products are dangerous to our children, pets, and the environment? Household cleaners, lawn and garden chemicals, gasoline, antifreeze, and many other substances need to be stored and disposed of properly.

When Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) makes its way into the environment, plants, animals, and humans can all be affected. Never throw away these materials into the trash or flushed down a drain.

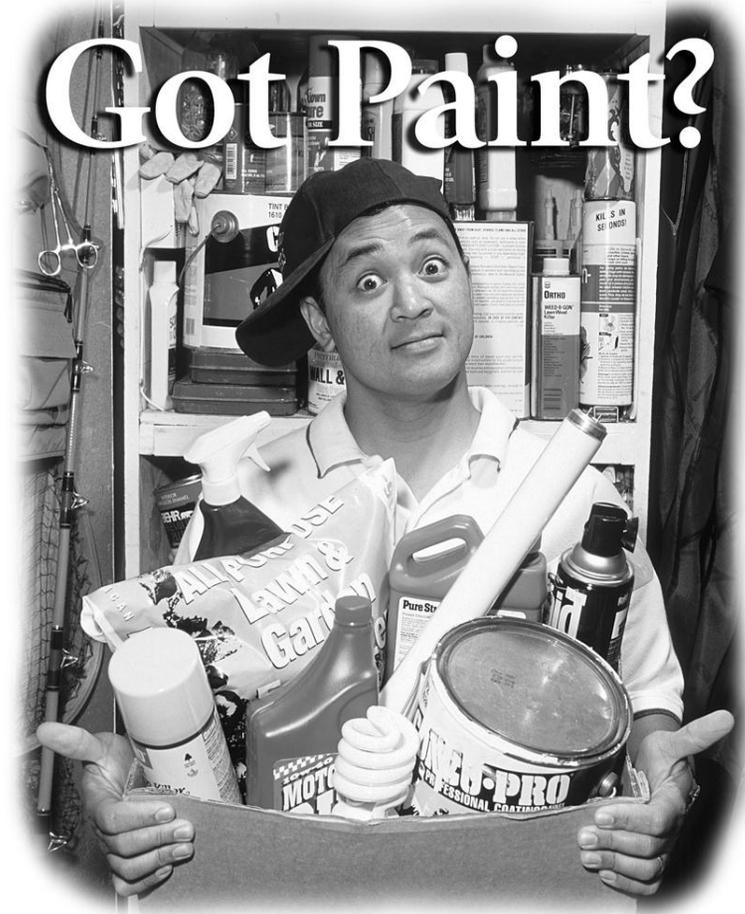
All the items listed in this brochure should be carefully handled and disposed of according to directions.

Please visit the Solid Water Authority's website at <http://www.co.berks.pa.us/Dept/SWA/Pages/default.aspx> for more information on HHW disposal events and accepted materials. Recycling and pharmaceutical information is also posted on the website.



## Examples of Household Hazardous Wastes

- ✓ Oil-based paint
- ✓ Vehicle fluids like gasoline, used motor oil, and antifreeze
- ✓ Lawn & garden fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides
- ✓ Pool Chemicals
- ✓ Solvents
- ✓ Household cleaners
- ✓ Electronic devices
- ✓ Asphalt and driveway sealants
- ✓ Vehicle batteries
- ✓ Lithium/NiCad batteries



### How does drinking water sometimes become polluted?

Your drinking water may become polluted when substances that are harmful to human health enter the groundwater or surface source, like a lake or reservoir. Common pollutants include gasoline or oil from leaking tanks, homeowner lawn and garden activities, salt from winter road maintenance, and other chemicals from stormwater runoff. Once water is contaminated, it must be treated or abandoned as a drinking water source. The expense of treating polluted water or finding a new source of drinking water can be avoided through source water protection.