

Chemical Safety at Home


Some of the everyday products we buy and use around the home include chemicals that have the potential to harm people and the environment. Serious accidents can occur if they are not handled and stored properly.


It is essential that the use, storage, handling and disposal of chemicals is carried out in accordance with the instructions on the label.


Always read the label first so that you know how to use the product properly and in safety. If you need more information contact your supplier or the manufacturer.


Common Household Chemicals


Some common hazardous household chemicals are identifiable by their Dangerous Goods Class Diamonds such as:

-  **Flammable Gases**
 - LPG cylinders; and
 - aerosol spray cans.

-  **Flammable Liquids**
 - solvent based paints, varnishes; and
 - petrol, mineral turpentine and kerosene.

-  **Oxidizing Substances**
 - granulated pool chlorine; and
 - diisocyanuric acid (pool 'sunscreen').

-  **Toxic Substances**
 - insecticides; and
 - disinfectants.

-  **Corrosive Substances**
 - household bleaches, drains cleaners, oven cleaners;
 - ammonia-based cleaners, and
 - liquid chlorine and acids.

However, many products may not have Dangerous Goods diamonds but are still hazardous, such as water-based paints and paint strippers; general purpose household cleaners; engine oil and brake fluid; and weed killers and fertilizers.

Chemical Use

Most chemical accidents occur in the home so it is important that you follow the directions on the container and take proper precautions.

- Always follow the directions on the label.
- Wear appropriate protective clothing – chemicals can enter the body by swallowing, breathing and through the skin.
- Many products should only be used in a well-ventilated area.
- Avoid mixing common household chemical products.
- Clean up spills.
- Replace lids and seal all packages.
- Good hygiene is essential – always wash up after use – yourself, your clothing and any equipment.

Chemical Storage

You can safely store pesticides or other household products until you need them again. Some of the safety rules to adhere to are:

- follow the storage instructions on the label;
- store products out of the reach of children and pets. Keep chemical household products locked in a cupboard;

- store flammable products away from sources of heat such as portable heaters and outdoor barbecues;
- never store pesticides or other potentially dangerous products in cupboards where food is stored, near food intended for people or animals or where you keep medicines;
- always store chemical products in their original containers so that you can read the label for directions; and
- never transfer chemicals to soft drink bottles or other food containers where people could mistake them for something to eat or drink; and

Disposal

When you have finished using chemicals and don't want to keep them any more, you need to dispose of them properly.

- Do **NOT** pour them onto the ground or into a stream.
- Do **NOT** bury them anywhere or burn the containers.

- Do **NOT** pour them down the sink, into the toilet or into the storm water drain - many wastewater treatment plants cannot handle that type of pollution.
- Do **NOT** put them in your bin – this can cause safety concerns in the collection truck, at the transfer station and at the landfill site.

You would be damaging the environment if you dispose of any leftover products in any of these ways.

So what should you do?

Many local authorities have waste collection programs for unwanted household chemicals, details of which will be available from your local council. Also read the section on disposal on the label.

Remember, only buy what you need to avoid unnecessary storage in the home or the need for disposal of left-overs.

These are general rules. Instructions for the handling of specific chemicals should be found on the labels and these should be strictly adhered to. For further information about specific chemicals, phone the manufacturer. For general enquiries about chemicals phone the Chemical Hazards and Emergencies (CHEM) Unit on **3247 8444** or visit the Unit's web site on <http://www.emergency.qld.gov.au/chem>

The SAFE Use of Chemicals in the Home

