

# Truro CERT: Household Hazardous Materials Safety

Hazardous materials can be found in every home. They help us work on our hobbies, gardens, maintain our cars and homes, and keep everything clean. But they also can catch fire or cause serious physical injury or death. Anyone can be at risk for injury; but those especially vulnerable are children, adults with memory problems, and pets. Some simple steps for storage can keep everyone safe and healthy.

## What are the Hazards?

The hazards vary among the different household chemicals you may use. Some common dangers are:

- **Irritants**: cause soreness or swelling of skin, eyes, mucous membranes, or the respiratory system
- **Corrosive**: a product or its vapors that destroy materials or living tissue
- **Poisons & Toxins**: if absorbed by the skin, inhaled, or swallowed, cause injury or death
  
- **Flammables**: non-liquids that catch fire easily and burn rapidly
- **Flammable Liquids**: have a flash point – the lowest temperature at which they will spontaneously combust – below 104°F
- **Combustible Liquids**: have a flash point at 140°F

## What Materials?

Hazardous materials in your home can range from simple medications and cleaning fluids to gasoline and propane. Some common ones include:

- **Auto Fluids**: oil, gas, brake fluid, anti-freeze
- **Household Cleaners**: bleach, ammonia, soaps, drain cleaner
- **Medications**: prescriptions and over-the-counter products
- **Beauty Products**: nail polish and remover, hairspray
- **Home Maintenance**: paint, paint thinner, adhesives, solvents
- **Lawn & Garden**: fertilizer, pesticides, gas, oil
- **Barbeque**: propane, charcoal, lighter fluid

*This is not a comprehensive list. Read the product's label to determine if the material is hazardous.*

## Safe Storage

Safe storage and handling are product-specific. All hazardous materials' labels have instructions for proper use and storage, so follow the label. Safe storage includes:

- Store all volatile products in a well-ventilated area as the fumes are toxic to humans and pets.
- Store all flammable and combustible products away from heat sources.
- Monitor the temperature of your storage area. Too hot: the materials may ignite. Too cold: liquids can freeze, expand, and burst containers.
- Keep the material in its original container with the original label.
- Check stored materials periodically for fumes, leaks, rust, dents, or corrosion.
- Keep materials locked away from children and pets.

## More Information

For more information on household hazardous materials, and the sources for this article, go to these websites:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household\\_hazardous\\_waste](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Household_hazardous_waste)

<https://www.epa.gov/hw/household-hazardous-waste-hhw>

<http://www.hazwastehelp.org/HHW/list.aspx>

[https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-1649/householdchemicalsfactsheet\\_final.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/media-library-data/20130726-1622-20490-1649/householdchemicalsfactsheet_final.pdf)

For more information on Truro's CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program or to volunteer, contact Jennifer Rose, CERT Director, at [theo35@comcast.net](mailto:theo35@comcast.net) or Kyle Takajian, Truro Police Chief.