

# Hazardous

**UPDATE**

# Waste

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*Hazardous Waste Update* is the Thurston County Business Pollution Prevention Program newsletter for small quantity generators of hazardous waste, such as auto recyclers and auto shops, print shops, schools, painters, dentists, pesticide applicators, and marinas.

To be taken off or added to this mailing list, or to request this newsletter in an alternative format, please call 360-754-4111. The TDD line is 360-754-2933.

The Business Pollution Prevention Program, run by the Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Department, Environmental Health Division, works with businesses to reduce, safely store, and properly dispose of small quantities of hazardous waste. The county provides technical assistance, workshops, fact sheets, a disposal site, and a Hazardous Waste Line at 360-786-5457.

## An Ounce of Prevention...

Imagine that you are a business owner with increasing profits and a growing staff, or maybe a successful sole proprietor thinking about retirement. One day, you realize it's time to sell your commercial property and move on to bigger and better things. You hire a commercial realtor who quickly finds an eager buyer for your property. Like many commercial real estate transactions, the bank wants assurance that the property is free of contamination before making the loan to your buyer. You agree to the bank's request without hesitation and hire a consultant to conduct an environmental assessment.



A leaking diesel underground storage tank removed from a local business site.

"Why should I be worried," you say to yourself. "I have always operated a clean shop." However, that's when trouble begins. The consultant soon finds that floor drains inside your maintenance shop are not connected to the city sewer like you thought, and instead drain into a drywell underneath the concrete floor. For decades, routine floor cleaning and

## Know the hazards of the products you use!!

If you are a business owner, or an employee at a local business, think for a minute about the hazardous products that you use or store. Nearly all operations have some variety of hazardous materials, with paints and petroleum products being the most common. However, some businesses work with specialized materials or processes, or provide specialized services, and use products that are not available to other businesses. Whether you get your products from a local industrial supply store or through a regional vendor, you need to understand the hazards that each product poses if used incorrectly or if an individual is accidentally hurt by it.

There are several ways to gather information about the hazards of a product. First, look to the product's container and label. Does the container have a Department of Transportation (DOT) hazard class diamond label on it? An example would be a pail of lacquer thinner, shipped to your business through a commercial carrier, bearing a red "Flammable Liquid" diamond on the side. Other common DOT labels include the black and white "Corrosive" or "Poison" labels. In total, each of the nine DOT hazardous material classifications has its own transportation label (or placard for the truck carrying the material).

There are other clues about the hazards that can often be found on the label. Precautionary statements might be located



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at the bottom of the front of the label, often beginning with words such as "Caution", "Warning", or "Danger". These words are typically followed by a statement about the health impacts that could result from improper use or handling. More detailed hazard information could be presented on the back of the label, or, if the material is a pesticide, the label may have a series of pages underneath the outer covering. Regardless of the format, for your safety, you should be familiar with the warnings about each product.

Increasing numbers of products bear two different, but related, hazard rating systems. One system, the National Fire Protection Association 704 multi-colored diamond, depicts a numeric hazard score for the product, based on how the product will "behave" in a fire or emergency scenario. Under the NFPA 704 system, ratings are provided for "Flammability", "Health", "Instability", and "Special Considerations".



A depiction of the National Fire Protection Association 704 diamond.

The special consideration box is often reserved for information like "OX" if the material is an oxidizer, or **W**, if the material cannot be exposed to water. While this hazard rating system was

designed to provide information about chemical hazards to first responders, it can also be useful to supervisors and employees, when purchasing and storing products.

The other significant hazard rating system is known as the HMIS, or Hazardous Material Information System. The HMIS was originally developed by the National Paint and Coatings Association to help paint distributors and users comply with federal and state hazard communication regulations developed and required by OSHA. Over the years, this rating system has been adopted by other industries, and has been updated, with the current version known as HMIS III.



An example of the Hazardous Material Information System (HMIS III).

The HMIS provides similar information to the NFPA hazard rating system, but it does not factor in a fire setting. The rating is based on standard user conditions, and includes a personal protection level, signified by a single or double letter. Using the provided key, an employee can understand what types of personal protective equipment are recommended for use when working with this material.

Your product's original container likely has some pretty good information about the hazard of the material contained inside

if you know what to look for. The material safety data sheet, or MSDS, that will often accompany the product has additional information that can help you make decisions about treating employees in the event of an accident involving the material.

While the original containers may be well-marked, it is common to transfer products into smaller containers for application or transport. The second container should also have some labeling to indicate the contents, as well as the hazard of the product. Businesses that use the HMIS system often have a supply of blank, write-on (or printable) HMIS labels to affix to spray bottles or other smaller containers.

If you encounter a product that had little information provided about its hazard, consider using a different, potentially less toxic or hazardous product. In addition, feel free to contact specialists with the Business Pollution Prevention Program at 360-786-5457, for help with identifying the product and its hazards. The program provides free technical assistance with many aspects of pollution prevention and chemical safety to any interested Thurston County business. ♦

## Mercury Collection Event Scheduled

For the last six years, Thurston County, along with other cities and counties across the state, has partnered with the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) to provide businesses and residents alike with an opportunity to dispose of their mercury-containing wastes. To date, these efforts have prevented over 10,000 pounds of mercury from being released into the environment.

This year, the mercury collection event will take place April 18 - 21 and April 25 - 28. See back page for additional details.

Items accepted free of charge include:

- Thermometers
- Thermostats
- Barometers
- Auto switches
- Float switches
- Button-cell batteries
- Dental amalgam

Fees for fluorescent and other lamps will still apply. Businesses that have not previously used HazoHouse can pre-register or fill out the required paperwork at the time of disposal. The facility, located at the Thurston County Waste and Recovery Center in Hawks Prairie, is open Friday through Monday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Please contact (360)786-5457 for additional information regarding business waste disposal. ♦

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rainwater has sent small, barely noticeable engine oil spills into the ground beneath the building. The oily residues have accumulated over time and you now learn that your building sits atop many tons of contaminated soil. Faced with six-figure cleanup costs, a publicly-listed contaminated property, and decreased property value, your once eager buyer has moved on in search of "greener pastures."

Unfortunately, this scenario has occurred to many Thurston County businesses. Each year, staff members from the Thurston County Business Pollution Prevention Program are involved with numerous contaminated sites caused by leaking or overfilled underground storage tanks, undocumented drywells, leaking hydraulic floor hoists, petroleum-contaminated runoff, and even minor housekeeping issues. "This type of contamination is rarely the result of intentional dumping or a major spill," says Brad Zulewski, Environmental Health Specialist from Thurston County. "These situations tend to happen quietly over time." In almost every case, however, the contamination was entirely preventable by implementing simple management practices.

Since 1992, the program has offered free assistance to local businesses regarding proper management of hazardous materials and waste. Using a non-regulatory, assistance-based approach, staff members meet with business owners and review their current hazardous waste management practices. If improvements can be made, staff will provide a wide range of helpful resources in the form

of current regulatory literature, waste disposal and equipment vendors, as well as waste reduction techniques. "Some of the best management practices are free. By simply increasing awareness, many future problems can be easily avoided today," says Zulewski. Here are a few ideas to consider:

- 1) Ensure that all of your hazardous materials and wastes are stored in secondary containment, as required by Thurston County Code.
- 2) Commit to a "dry shop" and clean up small spills or drips as they occur. Doing so will prevent or reduce the need for using water or chemicals when cleaning floors, which can produce hazardous wash water.
- 3) If your business is located within an older building that has floor drains, consider plugging the drains or find out where they discharge and take appropriate measures to prevent accidental releases.
- 4) Consider removing old underground storage tanks that have the potential to leak whether in use or not.
- 5) Keep oily scrap metals or auto parts under cover or indoors.
- 6) Prevent oily stormwater runoff in parking and outdoor work areas. Consider installing low-cost "oil only" absorbent booms in your stormwater drains.

For more information or to request free assistance, contact the Thurston County Business Pollution Prevention Program at (360) 786-5457 or visit us online at [www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html](http://www.co.thurston.wa.us/health/ehhw/index.html). ♦