



Household Hazardous Waste

Maybe you've recently bought an existing house, or a loved one has passed and you're cleaning out their house. There, in the garage, crawlspace or outbuilding sits a dusty shelf loaded with a cob-webbed variety of who-knows-what. Old cans of paint, solvents, spray insecticides, liquid fertilizers – maybe even a can of gasoline that you wouldn't dare to even try in your old lawnmower. Dumping them down the drain is a definite no-no, and putting them in the trash doesn't seem quite right, but what exactly are you supposed to do with all this junk? One lesson should be apparent: the next time you have to buy this sort of material, consider how much you really need for the job, and explore less-toxic alternatives.

The often frustrating reality is that in Georgia at this time, reuse and recycling options are extremely limited.

If you were a business generating this sort of waste, you would be required to track generation and disposal, and pay very high disposal costs to have the material safely removed and either recycled (most likely blended into fuels for industrial furnaces and boilers) or disposed in a hazardous waste landfill. However, state and federal laws provide an exemption for residents; you can legally throw this material in the garbage. However, the material must be a solid; garbage trucks are not allowed to pick up liquid waste.

Other companies will collect small amounts, but will charge high fees for the service, which typically involves sending a truck and chemist to collect the material. This option is recommended for small businesses, as part of the service includes providing documentation that the materials have been properly handled. Some known companies are listed below:

[Clean Harbors Environmental Services](#)

Tucker, GA 770-934-0902

[Safety-Kleen](#)

Norcross, GA 770-662-5151

For paint, one of the most common disposal headaches, DCA is aware of one company in the metro Atlanta area accepting small quantities from the general public at a low cost. [Atlanta Paint Disposal](#) only accepts latex paint, there is a charge and they do offer collection. See their website for details.

The processes described below basically involve either solidifying wastes for disposal via regular garbage service, or evaporation. With both of these basic processes, you want to work outside, and wear rubber gloves and eye protection. Never mix more than one material as you're preparing the items for disposal.

Solidification:

The idea here is to make the liquids solid. Sawdust or shredded newspaper will work, but for any real quantity you'll want to get some kitty litter, cheaper at auto parts stores; ask for oil dry. Double-line a garbage can with plastic garbage bags, add some oil dry and then some liquid waste. (Don't add oil dry to the liquid, as it may splash.) Work outside, away from access by children or animals. When the material is solidified, tie up the bag and it can then go into the regular trash. Be sure not to get the bag so heavy that you can't handle it, or that it ruptures. Wear gloves and safety glasses to prevent contact with the materials you're handling.

Evaporation:

This works best for thin, flammable liquids including gasoline and paint thinner. Work outside, away from access by children and animals. If there is just a trace amount of fuel in the container, simply open the top and let it evaporate. If you have more than a very little bit, you'll want to accelerate the process. Get some sort of disposable metal tray (an aluminum foil roasting pan is ideal) and pour a half-inch of fuel into the tray. The increased surface area will allow the fuel to evaporate much more quickly. Repeat this process until the fuel is gone, and then recycle or reuse the containers if possible.

The foil tray can be recycled with scrap aluminum in some collection programs; if you're leery of having the fuel-coated foil around your house until you can recycle it then wad up the tray, wrap it in a few layers of newspaper and put it in a sturdy plastic garbage bag. Then it can be disposed of in your regular household trash.

As more options come available, they will be posted to [Earth911](#)..

For more information visit the recycling page of the [GA Department of Community Affairs](#)