

Ann Arbor News “Your World” submission for 3-20-06:

In the areas flooded by Hurricane Katrina, many of the chemical products people had stored in their garages and basements floated out and into the “toxic stew”... yet another reminder that it is a good idea to promptly and properly dispose of home toxins you don't plan to use anymore.

April 1<sup>st</sup> marks this season's opening of the Washtenaw County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Site. This service is available to County residents every Saturday, from 9 am. to noon, from April through the first Saturday in December. It is free, although donations are always appreciated. For a list of items accepted, visit <http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org>.

Although some expenses are recouped through recycling, overall it costs money to run a home toxics program. But landfilling costs money too, and it is far cheaper for society in the long run to handle its toxins properly. Here are a few tips for making your drop-off trip more efficient:

- If you don't have much to bring, ask a neighbor or two if they have anything to contribute, so you will get the most out of that trip.
- If containers are empty or dried out, don't bring them. Put them in your regular trash instead.
- Check the labels of your leftover paint cans: are they oil-based or water-based (latex)? The oil-based are welcomed at the Collection site, as they can be reprocessed into fuel. But latex should be dried out (kitty litter speeds the process) and put into your regular trash. If you don't have time to do this, or if your cans of latex are over half full, the Collection Site will accept them. They will be sent to a facility that blends them into new paint.
- If a container doesn't have a label on it, please identify its contents (if known) by attaching a label. Note that all unmarked containers must go through a special testing procedure.
- Tape fluorescent light bulbs together to prevent breakage, which can cause the mercury powder within to escape. Remember that the Collection Site cannot accept bulbs over four feet long, while the County's Drop Off Station on Ellsworth Road accepts the longer ones.
- Put your button cell batteries in a zip lock bag to separate them from the other batteries.
- Don't bring medications—instead, triple bag them and dispose of them in your regular trash. Federal regulations prevent home toxic programs from accepting medications.

Many people are reluctant to put old meds in the trash, for fear they will end up polluting the groundwater. But modern landfills are capped and lined, and the fluids within are collected and treated. Landfilling is far better for the environment than putting leftover medications down the drain!

Please see [recycle.ewashtenaw.org](http://recycle.ewashtenaw.org) or call 734-222-6874 for more information.

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