

## **Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency**

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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Safety First When Handling Household Chemicals!**

**Coldwater, MI.** Home improvement store aisles are filling up with weed killer, insecticides and plant growers. While many of these products are safe if used properly and according to manufacturer's instructions, they can create potential health risks if mixed or used without appropriate safeguards. The Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency wants to remind you that safety should come first when working with household chemicals.

Many household products contain chemicals that can harm us. If these items are used, stored or disposed of improperly, you, your pets or the environment can be injured. Hazardous materials dumped on the ground or into the gutter can contaminate soil and the underground water supply. According to Rebecca Burns, Environmental Health Director at the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency, "Some products we use around our homes contain hazardous ingredients. These include many household cleaners, nail polish remover, motor oil, weed killer, hobby supplies, car batteries, household batteries, fluorescent bulbs, sharps, some electronics and bug sprays. When purchasing these types of products, it's good to consider, the purpose for these chemicals, why they are being purchased and how much is really need." Rebecca adds "By answering these questions, you can avoid wasting money by buying too much of a product and the hassles that follow when it comes time to dispose excess quantities."

**She suggests the following:**

- **Purchase only what you need.** Buy small amounts. Be sure to check the label for the following key words and avoid purchasing these products when possible:
  - Danger
  - Corrosive
  - Flammable
  - Caution
  - Harmful
  - Reactive
  - Oxidizer
  - Irritant
  - Poison
  - Fatal
  - Warning
  - Explosive
- **Read and follow *label* directions carefully.** When you must use a hazardous substance, apply only as directed and only as much as is needed.
- **Wear protective clothing such as safety glasses and gloves in well-ventilated areas.**
- **Store hazardous products in the original containers, in a cool dry place, away from children, pets and food.** Check for leaks. Do not mix products or store products together that may be incompatible. This may cause toxic chemical reactions such as: explosions, fires, skin and eye irritations.
- **Do not store hazardous products for more than one year from date of purchase.**
- **Keep the number of the *Poison Control Center* visible and posted near the telephone in case of emergency: 1(800) 222-1222** (available 24 hours a day/7 days per week.) You can also visit their website at ***www.aapcc.org***.

Certain types of household hazardous waste (HHW) products have the potential to cause physical injury to sanitation workers, contaminate septic tanks or wastewater treatment systems if poured down drains or toilets, and present hazards to children and pets if left around the house. Federal law allows disposal of these products in the trash. However, many communities have collection programs for HHW to reduce the potential harm posed by these chemicals. The health department encourages participation in HHW collection programs rather than discarding the HHW in the trash. Contact your local health department's environmental health, county/city government, or solid waste agency for the time and location of your HHW collection program. Always, read product labels for disposal directions to reduce the risk of products exploding, igniting, leaking, mixing with other chemicals, or posing other hazards on the way to a disposal facility.

(Even empty containers of HHW can pose hazards because of the residual chemicals that might remain.)

To learn more about how the health department's Environmental Health Division is working to protect your community, go to our website at [www.bhsj.org](http://www.bhsj.org).

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