

# Environmental health and safety

[Health & Medicine](#), [Mental Health](#)



1) Discuss what may constitute improper practices for the disposal of trash (solid wastes), particularly hazardous wastes. 2) Describe the human health problems that could occur if trash (solid wastes), particularly hazardous waste, is improperly disposed off in your community.

Municipal Solid Waste (MSW)—more commonly known as trash or garbage—consists of everyday items we use and then throw away, such as product packaging, grass clippings, furniture, clothing, bottles, food scraps, newspapers, appliances, paint, and batteries. This comes from our homes, schools, hospitals, and businesses (Municipal Solid Waste, 2013). There are many ways that constitute improper practices for the disposal of trash (solid waste). Some of the ways include: throwing it on the street, flushing down the toilet, sink or drain and in some cases throwing it directly into a body of water.

When flushed down a toilet, sink or drain, household hazardous waste goes through the sewage system to treatment plants not equipped to handle hazardous waste. At treatment plants, hazardous waste interferes with the biological treatment process by killing bacteria and contaminating the effluent that runs into the ocean. When hazardous waste is thrown on the street, it goes down storm drains leading into our area waterways, impacting the Pacific Ocean, our lakes, and our local beaches.

Improper use, storage and disposal of household hazardous products can potentially harm our families, children, and pets, pollute our neighborhoods and contaminate our ground, water and air. When thrown in with the regular trash, household hazardous waste can injure sanitation workers. In addition,

the hazardous waste may end up in landfills not intended or permitted for those types of wastes which could in turn impact groundwater. When poured on the ground, household hazardous waste may seep into and contaminate our groundwater or the ocean we swim in.

Chemicals affect our everyday lives. They are used to produce almost everything we use, from paper and plastics to medicines and food to gasoline, steel, and electronic equipment. More than 70, 000 chemicals are used regularly around the world. Some occur naturally in the earth or atmosphere; others are synthetic, or human-made. When we use and dispose of them properly, they may enhance our quality of life.

But when we use or dispose of them improperly, they can have harmful effects on humans, plants, and animals. (Hazardous Substances and Hazardous Waste, 2011). When hazardous wastes are released in the air, water, or on the land they can spread, contaminating even more of the environment and posing greater threats to our health. For example, when rain falls on soil at a waste site, it can carry hazardous waste deeper into the ground and the underlying groundwater.