



Preventing Hazardous Material Fires

For your safety and the well-being of your family be aware of what hazardous materials are, and then learn to store them or dispose of them properly.

Identifying Hazardous Materials

- By law, a flammable liquid is any product that corrodes other materials, explodes or is easily ignited, reacts strongly with water, is unstable when exposed to heat or shock, or is otherwise toxic to humans, animals, or the environment. Many cleaning supplies, such as bleach, ammonia, oven cleaners, and laundry detergents, are considered hazardous materials. But the largest concern for the West Metro Fire-Rescue is flammable liquids. Everyone knows what flammable liquids are—gasoline and fuels, paint, paint thinners, varnish, and lacquers—but hair spray (aerosol and pump), nail polish and remover, and banana oil are also highly flammable.

There is no way to list all common hazardous materials in this space, but flammable liquids are liquids with a flash point of less than 100° Fahrenheit. It is often not the liquid itself, but the vapors that present the most serious hazard. Flammable liquid vapors are heavier than air and may settle in low spots or move a significant distance from the liquid itself. Regardless of where the vapors end up, they can easily ignite or explode.

Minimizing the Risk of Ignition

Follow these tips to minimize the risk of igniting flammable liquid or vapors.

- Always check the material you're using to understand the specific hazards involved.
- Do not store fueled equipment (eg, lawn mowers) in your house.
- Do not store flammable liquids in the basement. Store in cool, well-ventilated areas away from corrosives, oxidizers, and ignition sources.
- Place a fire extinguisher near any area where flammable liquids are stored.
- Use only approved safety cans to store flammable

liquids.

- Never fill a container more than 80% full of a flammable liquid. (Leaving a vapor space in the container will allow the liquid to expand if the surrounding temperature changes.)
- Label all containers and cabinets with appropriate “flammable materials” signs.
- Never smoke within 50 feet of where flammable liquids are used or stored.
- Minimize the amount of flammable liquids used.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment, such as splash aprons and goggles, when handling flammable liquids.
- Never pour flammable liquids down a drain, sink, or storm sewer.
- Dispose of empty flammable liquid containers in an approved manner ([hazardous waste disposal sites](#)).

For more information, contact Fire Prevention Staff at 763-537 2323 extension 2003 or 2004..

Hazardous Materials in a Typical Home

(and reason for hazard)

- Bleach (reactive/toxic)
- Ammonia (flammable/corrosive)
- Oven cleaner (caustic)
- Detergent (harmful if swallowed/irritant)
- Aerosols (gas, irritant, corrosive, toxic, poisonous)
- Hair spray (flammable)
- Nail polish and removers (flammable)
- Perfume/cologne (flammable)
- Deodorant (aerosol/flammable)
- Paints, varnish, paint thinner (flammable)
- Gasoline (flammable/irritant)
- Diesel fuel (combustible)
- Pesticides/herbicides (poisonous)

Preventing Hazardous Material Fires continued

- Fertilizer (poisonous, caustic, oxidizer, explosive when mixed with hydrocarbons)
- Lighter fluid (flammable)
- Propane tanks (flammable)
- Oily rags (spontaneously combustible if stored outside of airtight containers)

Hazardous Waste Disposal Sites

- Hennepin County Recycling Center and Transfer Station
(8100 Jefferson Hwy, Brooklyn Park)
612-348-3777
- South Hennepin Recycling and Problem Waste Drop-Off Center
(1400 W 96th St, Bloomington)
612-348-3777

Hennepin County Environmental Services also has an A-Z How-To-Get-Rid-Of-It Guide for households. Look for the environment link at www.co.hennepin.mn.us, or call 612-348-3777, Monday–Friday, 8 am–4:30 pm.

