



Avoiding Chemical Emergencies

Home chemical accidents can result from trying to improve the way a product works by adding one substance to another, not following directions for use of a product, or by improper storage or disposal of a chemical. A few precautions can help you avoid many chemical emergencies that may affect you or first responders.

- **Avoid mixing chemicals**, even common household products. Some combinations, such as ammonia and bleach, can create toxic gases.
- **Always read and follow the directions** when using a new product. Some products should not be used in small, confined spaces to avoid inhaling dangerous vapors. Other products should not be used without gloves and eye protection to help prevent the chemical from touching your body.
- **Store chemical products properly**. Non-food products should be stored tightly closed in original containers so you can identify the contents of each container and how to properly use the product. Don't store chemicals at home if possible, buy only as much as you think you will use. If you have product left over, try to give it to someone who will use it or properly dispose of it.
- **Beware of fire**. Never smoke while using household chemicals. Don't use hair spray, cleaning solutions, paint products, or pesticides near the open flame of an appliance, pilot light, lighted candle, fireplace, wood burning stove, etc. Although you may not be able to see or smell them, vapor particles in the air could catch fire or explode.
- **Clean up any spills immediately** with some rags, being careful to protect your eyes and skin. Allow the fumes in the rags to evaporate outdoors in a safe place, then wrap them in a newspaper and place the bundle in a sealed plastic bag. Dispose of these

materials with your trash. Have a fire extinguisher that is labeled for A, B, and C class fires and keep it handy.

- **Dispose of unused chemicals properly.** Improper disposal can result in harm to you or family members, accidentally contaminate our local water supply, or harm other people or wildlife. Many household chemicals can be taken to select county transfer stations for disposal or recycling.