

# DOWN THE DRAIN?

## OUT WITH THE TRASH?

- *what should be disposed of in sewers and the landfill*
  - *recycling and composting*
- *disposal of hazardous waste from homes and small businesses*



**This is our only planet. Let's take good care of it.**

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### Highlights

- Many products that we use in and around our homes and businesses contain chemicals that are poisonous, corrosive, flammable, or otherwise harmful. These are considered "Hazardous Waste."
- Each year, a typical American household produces more than 20 pounds of hazardous waste. Many of those wastes, even in small amounts, can endanger people and our environment if they are not used and disposed of properly. Waste that is disposed of incorrectly may get into the soil, groundwater, streams, rivers or lakes. Each of us can make a difference by taking responsibility for the products we buy, use, and dispose of.
- Liquid wastes that are safe for disposal in the public sewer system include body wastes; and water from personal bathing, showering and washing; washing clothes and dishes; preparing food; and normal-strength cleaning fluids.
- Refuse suitable for the Orange County Landfill includes routine residential, business and institutional items other than liquid, hazardous, explosive and medical waste. Items that can be recycled or composted should not go to the landfill, of course.
- Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) can be taken to the HHW facility at the Orange County Landfill on Mondays through Fridays from 10 AM to 6 PM and on Saturdays from 7:30 AM to noon. In addition to serving residents, the HHW facility is available for Orange County businesses that generate up to 220 pounds a month of hazardous wastes and meet related requirements.

### WHAT IS WASTEWATER?

**Wastewater** includes body waste; water from bathing, showering and washing; washing clothes and dishes; washing, rinsing and otherwise preparing food; and from normal household cleaning with household detergents and cleaners.

Wastewater is distinguished from **stormwater**. **Stormwater** is rainwater that has fallen on the ground, a building, parking or roadway, etc. and flows through ditches, storm drains, pipes, curb and gutter, etc. into streams, creeks, rivers and/or lakes.

## WHAT IS A SANITARY SEWER?

A sanitary sewer is a publicly-maintained pipe, normally with a diameter of at least eight inches, which carries wastewater to a treatment plant.

A wastewater treatment plant uses physical, biological and chemical processes to clean and disinfect wastewater so that it can be returned to the natural environment, usually at a stream, creek or lake; or reused for non-drinking purposes in accord with State standards.

In our community, the Mason Farm Wastewater Treatment Plant on the southeast side of Chapel Hill returns highly treated wastewater to Morgan Creek, a tributary of Jordan Lake. We add chlorine to some of our treated wastewater, and the University uses this “reclaimed” water for non-drinking purposes such as make-up water in cooling towers, irrigation and flushing toilets in some facilities.

The solid particles separated from wastewater are treated and converted into “biosolids” that are recycled on farmland to help grow crops for non-human consumption or used by a company that makes soil additives.

## ARE STORM DRAINS PART OF OWASA’S SYSTEM?

Towns and property owners are responsible for the **stormwater drainage system**, which is separate from OWASA’s sanitary sewer system. Separation avoids overflows during storms.

Please contact your Town’s stormwater managers for options of piping uncontaminated water from foundation drains, roof drains, or sump pumps into landscaped areas or the drainage system. These discharges are NOT allowed to be plumbed into OWASA’s sanitary sewers.

Stormwater has traditionally been piped directly to creeks with no treatment. New development requires stormwater management to prevent flooding and pollution of creeks and drinking water reservoirs.

## HOW TO DISPOSE OF VARIOUS ITEMS—A SUMMARY

ITEM	RECOMMENDED DISPOSAL
Body waste and toilet paper	Sanitary sewer system
Water from bathing, brushing teeth, showering and washing	Sanitary sewer system
Water from washing clothes and dishes including fabric softener and bleach in rinse water	Sanitary sewer system
Water from preparing food	Sanitary sewer system
Water used in routine cleaning of floors, counters, appliances, etc. including normal-strength water-soluble cleaning fluids.	Sanitary sewer system
Uncontaminated stormwater from foundation and roof drains or a “sump pump” that gathers water in a basement, under a house, etc.	Direct this water to a landscaped area, rain barrel or cistern
Solid waste such as food waste not suitable for composting, non-recyclable trash, debris, ashes, rags, animal tissue, cat litter, hygiene products, condoms, needles, razor blades, etc.	Landfill
Fat and grease from a residence-up to one quart	Landfill
Vegetable matter, grass clippings, tree and shrub cuttings, paper towels, packing peanuts made from corn starch	Compost
Paper including newspapers, magazines, phone books, junk mail; gable-topped cartons (for beverages, soup, etc.); flat-topped aseptic boxes; cereal boxes and other single layer cardboard	Recycle

ITEM	RECOMMENDED DISPOSAL
Corrugated cardboard, glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles and jugs, metal food and drink cans	Recycle
Fat, oil and grease from a restaurant or similar business	Fat, oil and grease can be captured in a grease trap for collection by a private company and subsequent recycling. Used cooking oil can be separately recycled to make biodiesel, etc. Please see additional information <a href="#">below</a> .
Cooking oil from a residence	Recycle through the Household Hazardous Waste program (HHW)
ITEM	RECOMMENDED DISPOSAL
Large amounts ( <b>more than one quart</b> ) of fat and grease from a residence	HHW
Automotive fluids, lubricants and other chemicals including used oil and oil filters, anti-freeze, brake and transmission fluid	HHW (also accepted at Orange County's Solid Waste Convenience Centers)
Other mineral oils	HHW
Lawn, garden, and pool chemicals	HHW
Gasoline, kerosene, and other fuels and substances that may explode or burn.	HHW
Chemicals used in pools and hot tubs.	HHW
Corrosive substances (acidic or alkaline items including but not limited to those with a pH lower than 6 or higher than 10).	HHW
Fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides/insecticides in solid, liquid or spray form.	HHW
Metals and metal compounds including mercury, lead, etc.	HHW
Detergents with more phosphate than allowed under NC law	HHW
Paint, stains, wood preservatives, solvents, sealants, thinners, poisons	HHW
Nail polish and nail polish remover	HHW
Undiluted bleach, drain cleaner and hair dye	HHW
Fluorescent lights--both straight and helical, CFL, or "twisted" tubes	HHW
Thermostats containing mercury	HHW
Cylinders containing compressed gases	HHW
Batteries	HHW (also accepted at Solid Waste Convenience Centers)
Medication (unused or expired)	Drug take-back events. Please see <a href="#">below</a> the Federal guidelines including how to prepare medication for landfill disposal if a take-back program is unavailable.

## HOW TO REDUCE YOUR WASTE

- Buy only items you need and in the amounts you need.
- Use up any hazardous products completely, following the instructions on the label.
- Use non-toxic or less toxic products.
- Use multi-purpose cleaners instead of a collection of specialized cleaning products.
- Compost items such as vegetable food scraps and leaves.
- Rinse and recycle empty containers that held water-soluble cleaners.

For more information, please visit [www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling/hhw](http://www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling/hhw) , call 968-2788 or send e-mail to [recycling@co.orange.nc.us](mailto:recycling@co.orange.nc.us) .

## HOW TO DISPOSE OF HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE (HHW)

Household hazardous wastes should not be put in a sewer or landfill because HHWs can harm the natural environment, animals, people, the landfill, sewers or the wastewater treatment plant.

The HHW facility at the Orange County Landfill at 1514 Eubanks Road is open Mondays through Fridays from 10 AM to 6 PM and on Saturdays from 7:30 AM to noon. The landfill is just north of Chapel Hill and 1.25 miles west of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard/NC 86 just south of I-40.

Please bring items in their original containers with original labels intact whenever possible; do not mix wastes; and do not bring explosives, infectious wastes, or radioactive materials.

### ORANGE COUNTY BUSINESSES CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE HHW PROGRAM IF THE REPRESENTATIVE DELIVERING WASTE CERTIFIES THAT THE BUSINESS:

- does not generate more than 220 pounds of hazardous waste per month, and
- does not generate acute hazardous waste as defined in Federal rules (40 CFR 261.31, 261.32, or 261.33 [e]) at a rate over 2.2 pounds per month.

Businesses with more than 50 cans of paint should call 968-2788 to schedule an appointment.

## HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNUSED MEDICATION AND OTHER PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

Medication, cosmetics, fragrances, lotions, sunscreen, medical diagnostic agents, etc. are sometimes called Pharmaceuticals and Personal Care Products or “**PPCPs**.”

When PPCPs are flushed down a toilet or put in a drain, their chemical components may end up in a stream, creek, river or lake because wastewater treatment plants and septic systems are not designed to remove them.

PPCPs in water are an area of growing scientific interest because their long-term effect on animals and people is largely unknown. For example, there are concerns that PPCPs including steroids and antibiotics may over time affect the health of people and animals directly or indirectly.

Steroids may affect endocrine/hormone systems; bacteria and other germs exposed to antibiotics in the natural environment may develop resistance to them.

**FEDERAL GUIDELINES FOR MEDICATION DISPOSAL** [The information below in brackets is added for local residents/ businesses.]

Do not flush prescription drugs down the toilet or drain unless the label or accompanying information specifically instructs you to do so.

For information on drugs that should be flushed, visit

<http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm> [or call 1-888-INFO-FDA].

Call your city or county government’s household trash and recycling service and ask if a drug take-back program is available [The Orange County Department of Solid Waste Management can be reached at 968-2788, or you can contact your local police or sheriff’s department to ask about medication take-back events.]

### IF A DRUG TAKE-BACK OR COLLECTION PROGRAM IS NOT AVAILABLE:

1. Take your prescription drugs out of their original containers.
2. Mix drugs with an undesirable substance, such as cat litter or used coffee grounds.

3. Put the mixture into a disposable container with a lid, such as an empty margarine tub, or into a sealable bag.
4. Conceal or remove any personal information, including Rx number, on the empty containers by covering it with black permanent marker or duct tape, or by scratching it off.
5. Place the sealed container with the mixture, and the empty drug containers, in the trash

## **FAT, OIL AND GREASE (“FOG”) DISPOSAL**

Fat, oil and grease (FOGs) *from residences* should NOT be disposed of in a sink, drain, or toilet. Fat, oil and grease can block and thereby cause wastewater overflows from the public sewer system as well as blocking private plumbing drains.

Residents should dispose of small amounts (1 quart or less) of fat and grease in a sealed container with household solid waste.

In general, liquids should not be disposed of with regular garbage. Therefore, please make an effort to “solidify” fat, oil and grease by absorption into paper towel(s) or newsprint, etc.

*Households with cooking oil or more than one quart of fat and grease should deliver these items to the Household Hazardous Waste Collection program (Please see the [Household Hazardous Waste](#) section of this brochure for more information.)*

**FATS, OIL AND GREASE (FOG) FROM BUSINESSES SUCH AS RESTAURANTS** also should not go into the sewer system. FOG can be captured in a grease trap and regularly removed by a company that recycles the FOG, however, businesses with significant amounts of used cooking oil are encouraged to contract with a company that collects and recycles the oil for use in making biofuels, and other products. **Businesses and other organizations with UP TO TEN GALLONS OF COOKING OIL PER MONTH can take it to the Household Hazardous Waste facility for recycling.**

## **QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?**

For questions about whether to dispose of a particular item through the sewer or wastewater system, please contact OWASA Public Affairs at 537-4267 or send an e-mail to [webmaster@owasa.org](mailto:webmaster@owasa.org).

For questions about whether to dispose of a particular item with normal household or business refuse that will be put in the Orange County Landfill, please contact Orange County Solid Waste at 968-2788 or [recycling@co.orange.nc.us](mailto:recycling@co.orange.nc.us), or call your local public works department.

The information above is provided through the cooperation of the

### **Orange Water and Sewer Authority**

*A public, non-profit agency providing water, sewer and reclaimed water services to the Carrboro-Chapel Hill community*

400 Jones Ferry Road, Carrboro, NC 27510; E-mail: [webmaster@owasa.org](mailto:webmaster@owasa.org)  
Telephone: 919-968-4421; Fax: 968-4464; Website: [www.owasa.org](http://www.owasa.org)

### **Orange County Department of Solid Waste Management**

1207 Eubanks Road, Chapel Hill, NC 27516; E-mail: [recycling@co.orange.nc.us](mailto:recycling@co.orange.nc.us)  
Telephone: 919-968-2788; Fax: 932-2900; Website: [www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling](http://www.co.orange.nc.us/recycling)

### **Town of Chapel Hill Stormwater Management Division**

405 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, Chapel Hill, NC 27514; E-mail [stormwater@townofchapelhill.org](mailto:stormwater@townofchapelhill.org)  
Telephone: 919-969-RAIN; Fax: 969-7276; Website: [www.townofchapelhill.org/stormwater](http://www.townofchapelhill.org/stormwater)