

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS



CHEMICAL – the very word brings a vivid vision to mind in most people. Many of the visions are unpleasant, centering on the latest news story of an accident or lingering environmental damage from improper storage, use or disposal of chemicals. However, many aspects of modern life are made possible or improved by responsible use and handling of chemicals.

AROUND THE HOUSE

When we think of hazardous chemicals, we tend to think of manufacturing plants with billowing smoke stacks, or train cars or big trucks on the highway. While these are all valid, we should also think of our kitchen cabinets, our garage, our pool and a number of other places in our home where potentially harmful chemicals are a part of our everyday life. We are familiar with these items and have come to trust them. We may have even forgotten that they can injure or even kill us. When was the last time you read the label on your drain cleaner, window cleaner, weed killer or insecticide?

Here are a few common household chemicals and their potential hazards:

- Chlorine (pool) – toxic fumes, corrosive and highly reactive
- Muriatic Acid (pool) – corrosive, toxic by inhalation and highly reactive
- Ammonia – toxic fumes and very reactive with other common cleaners
- Lighter Fluid – flammable
- Propane (grill) – highly flammable
- Gasoline – flammable with vapors that are heavier than air and can travel to an ignition source
- Motor Oil – combustible
- Weed Killer – toxic by ingestion or absorption through skin
- Bug Killer – toxic by inhalation or absorption
- Drain Cleaner – toxic, caustic, and corrosive
- Nail Polish Remover – flammable
- Paint – flammable
- Fertilizer – toxic, possibly flammable or explosive

No matter how comfortable you are with a product, here are some important safety reminders:

- ❖ ALWAYS read and follow **all** label directions

- ❖ Never mix chemicals
- ❖ Use only for approved purposes and in approved concentrations
- ❖ Store and dispose of safely and in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions
- ❖ Keep away from children and never store in containers that could be confused as food or drink
- ❖ Pay attention to first aid directions
- ❖ Keep the number of your local poison control center handy

If you suspect someone has been exposed to a chemical, consult your physician or call the **Florida Poison Information Network** at: **1-800-222-1222**

If the injuries appear serious or the victim has trouble breathing, **call 911!**

TRANSPORTATION



Hazardous materials are substances which can be harmful to human health, or the environment. Everyday shipments of hazardous materials are handled safely, without accident, by highway, rail, air and sea. However, there are occasional accidents.

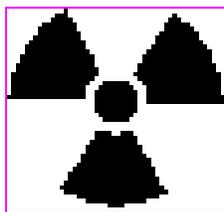
The materials, the containers and the people who handle and transport them are highly regulated to ensure our safety. Also, because of the design and construction of chemical transportation containers, significant releases are rare. However, in an accident you can still be affected either at home or on the highway.

If you are at home you will be notified through the media or local public safety agencies. Follow instructions quickly and carefully. You may be ordered to evacuate or to “shelter in place” depending on the chemicals involved. If ordered to evacuate do so immediately.

Shelter in Place means to stay inside where you are. If you are directed to shelter in place, close all windows and doors and turn off the air conditioner. Duct tape and plastic sheeting can be used to seal around doors, windows and other openings. If this is not available, use damp towels or blankets to seal around doors and windows. The goal is to prevent outside air from entering your home. Do not go outside or open doors or windows, until local authorities tell you it is safe. Once the all clear is given you should ventilate your home by opening doors and windows to purge any possible contaminants from the event.

If you see or are involved in a traffic accident, take special care to avoid exposure to hazardous chemicals. Do not walk or drive through a vapor cloud or spilled product. Pay attention to any placards – diamond shaped panels with numbers and/or symbols on them. Provide the placard number to authorities when they arrive or if you call 911. Small quantities of hazardous material may not be placarded. The most important safety step in protecting yourself and others is to avoid or reduce exposure to the chemical. If able, evacuate the area. Move crosswind to safety and keep other people from entering the area.

Nuclear Power Plants



There are three nuclear power plants in Florida: Crystal River, north of Tampa; St. Lucie, north of Palm Beach; and Turkey Point, south of Miami. Even under worst-case conditions, an accidental release at any of these plants should not spread dangerous radioactivity over Southwest Florida. However, we might receive evacuees from other counties. Evacuees pose no health risk. However, agricultural products from those areas would not be permitted to enter into our county.

Radioactive Materials

It is possible that a transportation accident could involve a radioactive substance. These materials are packed in limited quantities in very durable, well marked containers that are heavily over-packed. If you see a marked package, or suspect radioactive material may be involved in an accident, simply move away from the area. Advise emergency responders of its presence. Do not attempt to move it yourself.

Biohazardous Material



Another hazardous material often seen in transit is biohazard material. Healthcare facilities generate and dispose of large quantities of this material, which may at first glance appear to be ordinary garbage. Biohazardous material could expose you to disease causing agents. As with other hazardous materials, you can usually avoid exposure by not contacting or handling the material or container. Call the authorities and explain the situation. They will provide the correct response.