THE USUAL SUSPECTS

YOU KNOW THESE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS DON'T BELONG IN THE TRASH. BUT WHAT DO YOU DO WITH THEM? LET'S FIND OUT ...

A Special Advertising Supplement

DO THE RIGHT THING FOR SAN BENITO COUNTY

Proper management of household hazardous waste protects our environment

The stairs leading to Pinnacles National Park. Proper disposal of hazardous waste can help keep San Benito landmarks like this clean.
PHOTO COURTESY JAYME SIMMONS

BY MICHELLE CARL

What do you do with all of that toxic, corrosive stuff that sits in your garage or under your sink?

You want to get rid of it, but you have a suspicion that it could be harmful. Turns out you're right.

The products we use every day in our homes serve a purpose. But when it's time to dispose of them, special care must be taken to make sure potentially harmful ingredients don't make their way into our environment. Chemicals in illegally or improperly disposed hazardous waste can be released into the environment and contaminate our air, water and possibly the food we eat. That's why many of these materials are banned from being thrown into landfills in California.

And it's why household hazardous waste (HHW) programs are needed, says Jeremy Simmons, Recycling & Resource Recovery Coordinator for San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Regional Agency.

"The San Benito River flows directly to Monterey Bay, therefore any hazardous waste dumped in San Benito County will eventually end up polluting a National Marine Sanctuary," he says.

In addition to protecting our environment, Simmons points out that safe and legal disposal of these materials also protects waste management workers.

"They could be exposed to harmful chemical reactions, stabbed by contaminated needles or burned in an explosion," he says, noting that these incidents have happened to waste management workers in our state.

Most people want to do the right thing, but a lack of free and easy ways to properly dispose of materials may lead to people throwing HHW in the trash, or worse — dumping it.

"Illegal dumping in San Benito County is a significant problem," says Stacey Watson, code enforcement officer for San Benito County. She's seen vacant properties and natural waterways become dumping ground for paint, used motor oil, tires and toxic chemicals.

> **"ANY HAZARDOUS WASTE DUMPED IN SAN BENITO COUNTY WILL EVENTUALLY END UP POLLUTING A NATIONAL MARINE SANCTUARY."**
>
> **Jeremy Simmons**
> *Recycling & Resource Recovery Coordinator,*
> *San Benito County Integrated Waste Management Regional Agency*

Luckily for San Benito residents, proper disposal is as easy as visiting the San Benito landfill the third Saturday of each month at HHW collection events. Residents can bring up to 15 gallons of HHW waste, disposing of it safely while removing it from their property (where it could cause harm to children and pets). There also are several local retailers who accept HHW materials anytime, including batteries, used motor oil and medical waste (like needles and unwanted medications). And it's free for San Benito residents through the county.

"Until manufacturers take on the responsibility of providing for safe disposal of their products, it will be up to local governments to provide a way to keep these pollutants out of our environment and keep workers safe," Simmons says.

WHY CAN'T I THROW IT IN THE TRASH?

Chemicals from the products we use can be released into the environment if not properly disposed. To legally dispose of them, they must be taken to an HHW facility (see backpage). Or try these tips to minimize your use of HHW.

How to reduce your use of HHW

- Ask yourself, "Do I really need this?"
- Estimate what you need and don't overbuy. Use up the product entirely.
- Read labels and seek non-toxic and biodegradable products. Pay attention to storage and disposal instructions.
- Find safer alternatives, like latex instead of oil-based paint, or cedar chips instead of mothballs.
- Learn about alternative methods of solving household issues that use less harmful substances, like baking soda and vinegar.

HELPING KEEP OUR COMMUNITY CLEAN

Retailers make recycling HHW easy

Lance Goularte, owner of Hollister Paint Company, says his store collects two to three bins of paint (which hold 100 gallons each) every couple weeks.
PHOTO BY CHIP HOLLEY

Jesse Diaz puts propane into a refillable cylinder, which cuts down on waste from single-use propane cylinders that are costly to properly dispose. Refilling cylinders only costs around $1.50 and the process takes about 5 minutes.
PHOTOS BY CHIP HOLLEY

BY MICHELLE CARL

If you have a bunch of outdated cell phones stashed in junk drawers around the house or paint cans stacking up in your garage, these two environmentally-minded San Benito retailers have a way for you to get rid of them.

Hollister True Value accepts used batteries and cell phones. Opening Manager Jesus "Jesse" Diaz says customers really like being able to drop off these items anytime the store is open, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

"A lot of people love that it's close by in the community. You'd be surprised how many people save batteries for drop off — big bagfuls and handfuls," he says. "We get bags of old cell phones, even old flip phones."

Being a recycling drop-off location is just another way the business provides customer service — and it requires very little effort on Diaz's part. Once the collection box is full, it's picked up by UPS.

"It's really easy and convenient for everybody, that's another part of why we do it," he says. "And it helps keep Hollister clean."

Hollister True Value is also keeping our community clean by stocking refillable propane cylinders. Purchasing refillable cylinders helps reduce waste from single-use cylinders, which are difficult to dispose. Although they cost just a little bit more (around $13), they can be refilled for $1.50.

"We're getting the word out as much as we can," Diaz says of the refillables. "Environmentally friendly people love it and bring them in all the time."

If paint is the product you want to offload, **Hollister Paint Company** is the place to do it. Owner Lance Goularte says the store mixes and strains old paints into new 5-gallon buckets for large-scale jobs, such as fence painting, graffiti cover or painting the stage for local school drama productions.

"We saw so much money being wasted, and we also were not sure what people were doing with the old paint. Were they throwing it in the trash or the landfill?" Goularte says. "We thought, how else can we use this paint so it doesn't go back into our environment?"

Now through the PaintCare recycling program, Hollister Paint Company accepts up to 20 gallons of paint per household. Aerosol paints aren't accepted, and cans have to be labeled, but "other than that, we pretty much accept everything," Goularte says.

Goularte says being a paint recycling location has led to new customers discovering his store, but he's mostly glad to be the place where residents can do the right thing.

"That's the most important thing," he says. "Our Earth is really precious for our future and our kids and our kids' kids."

BUT WHAT ABOUT ...

Tricky items you may not realize are HHW

Musical greeting cards

Your birthday card that belts out a tune when you open it is powered by a battery, which contains heavy metals and corrosive materials. Rip out the battery before you recycle the card.

Unused medication

Unused or expired medications could pose a threat to the environment if put in the trash or flushed down the toilet. Instead, remove identifying labels and drop them off at an HHW facility.

Cooking oil = biofuel!

The leftover oil from your deep-fried Twinkie experiment can clog up pipes if dumped down the drain, or create havoc for waste facilities. Bring it to an HHW facility and it will be reused as biofuel.

That bottle of pesticide with just a little bit left in the bottom

That little bit left could leak out into the landfill, where storm water could wash it out into the environment. Rinse out the bottle three times and dump the rinse water into the sewer system, then throw away, or bring it to an HHW facility.

KNOW WHERE IT GOES

Keep household hazardous waste out of the trash — it's free!

HHW COLLECTION EVENT

Bring up to 15 gallons of HHW to this monthly collection event!

Every 3rd Saturday
9 a.m. - 12 p.m.

John Smith Road Landfill
2650 John Smith Road
Hollister, CA 95023
831-636-4110
www.cosb.us/iwm

San Benito residents only, proof of residency required.

WHAT AND HOW

When packaging and transporting HHW items:

- Keep in original containers
- Do not mix products
- Place leaking containers in larger plastic container with lid
- Secure upright to prevent tipping

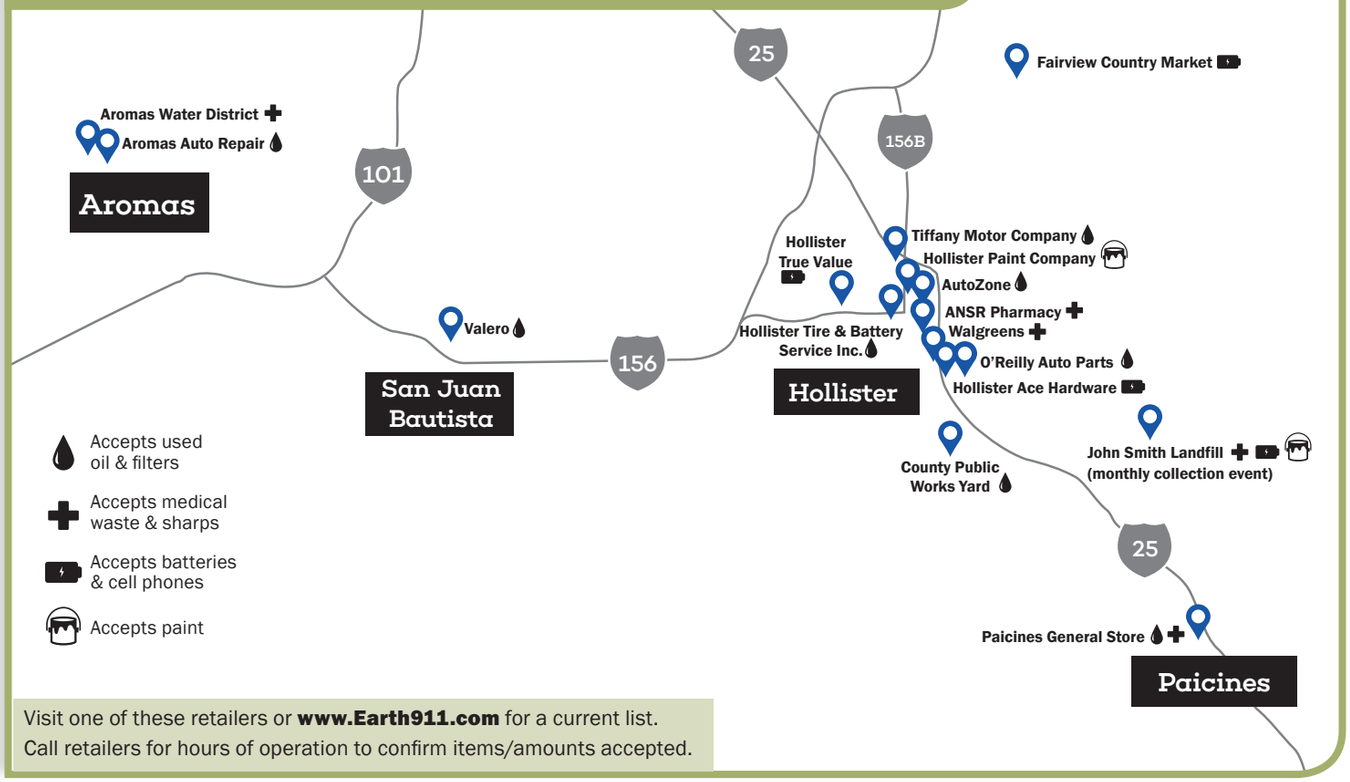
Acceptable Items

Pesticides, Fungicides, Weed Killers, Pool Chemicals, Small Propane Tanks, Paint (all kinds), Paint Thinner, Wood Preservatives, Glues & Adhesives, Solvents, Photo Chemicals, Antifreeze, Oil & Filters, Gasoline, Wash & Polishes, Auto Batteries, Engine Cleaners, Brake Fluid, Ammonia-Based Cleaners, Bleach-Based Cleaners, Aerosol Sprays, Polishes, Fluorescent Lamps, Nail Polish & Remover, Medications & Syringes

Not Accepted

Explosives, Ammunition, Radioactive Waste, Biological Waste (syringes & lancets must be in an approved sharps container available free to San Benito County residents).

RETAIL HHW COLLECTION LOCATIONS



Visit one of these retailers or **www.Earth911.com** for a current list.
Call retailers for hours of operation to confirm items/amounts accepted.

OR RECYCLE AT HOME!

Recology offers **curbside recycling of batteries and motor oil**. Simply place your regular household batteries in a clear, zippered plastic bag on top of your blue recycling cart. For motor oil, call Recology at **831-636-7500** to request special containers for oil and oil filters, which can be placed on the curb (limit 3 gallons/filters per week).

Service available for single-family homes (not a multi- family complex).

Funded with a grant from CalRecycle

Produced for San Benito County by N&R Publications, www.nrpubs.com.