

Secure Those Chemicals Before the Storm Comes

Hurricane season began June 1 and continues through November 30. As you prepare your family for hurricane season, don't forget to properly safeguard the chemicals in your home. Families usually store chemicals such as fertilizers, paints, automotive fluids, pesticides, and cleaners in garages, sheds, kitchens, and bathrooms. If a hurricane's damaging rain were to flood your home and break these containers, dangerous chemicals would be introduced into the environment, with the potential to endanger public health, wildlife, and our ecosystem.

There are some things you can do to keep chemicals from spilling into the environment during tropical disasters. First, make sure your garage door is solid, sturdy, and fully operational. According to the Federal Alliance for Safe Homes (FLASH), nearly 80 percent of wind damage in homes starts with wind coming through garage doors. In case your electric garage door doesn't work in time of power outages, make sure you know how to operate your door manually.

Now is a great time – before the storm – to rid your home of chemicals you don't use anymore. Take them to the Household Electronics and Chemical Collection Center (HEC3), operated by Pinellas County Utilities. Simply drop off your hazardous chemicals for free at 2990 110th Avenue North, St. Petersburg. Hours of operation are:

- Monday to Friday - 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Saturdays - 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- (The facility is closed Sunday and all county observed holidays.)

If you bring chemicals to the HEC3 center, remember:

- Don't mix chemicals together.
- Keep products in original labeled containers, if possible.
- Place leaky containers in clear plastic bags and transport in boxes with newspaper.
- Put boxes in the trunk or in the back of vehicle away from passenger.

The HEC3 Center cannot accept automotive/marine batteries, biological/infectious waste, empty paint cans, explosives, fire extinguishers, propane tanks, or radioactive waste. For more information, visit http://www.myclearwater.com/green/waste_disposal.asp or call (727) 464-7500.