

Keep Chemicals Out of Water and More Money in Your Pocket

When most people think about water pollution, images of leaking oil tankers, factories spilling toxic wastes into waterways, or garbage strewn along the beach come to mind. The fact is the problem is a lot closer to home. In fact, it's in your home.

One of the major sources of water pollution is area residents, not industries. Commonly used products like paint, motor oil, pesticides, and many cleansers contain toxic chemicals which, when poured down drains, pass through wastewater treatment plants and end up in local creeks, lakes and the ocean, harming fish and wildlife. Wastewater treatment plants are designed to treat biological wastes and cannot remove all the metals, solvents, and chemicals contained in many household products.

Use these tips to help keep pollutants out of our water. Many of these tips will also save you money because they are less expensive than commercial cleaning products:

- Use baking soda mixed with water as an inexpensive, effective, all-purpose cleaner instead of using harsh commercial products.
- Use lemon juice or vinegar mixed with water to cut grease, clean glass, and clean vinyl and linoleum floors.
- Use toothpaste to remove scuffmarks from floors and watermarks from wood furniture.
- Use vinegar around faucets to remove hard water mineral deposits. Cover the deposits with vinegar-soaked strips of paper towels for about an hour, then wipe clean.
- Use club soda to clean carpet and upholstery stains.
- Use olive oil or linseed oil to revitalize old furniture.
- Use a plunger instead of chemicals to clear clogged toilets and drains.
- Use digital fever thermometers instead of ones that contain mercury.
- Use latex instead of oil-based paints. Use water-based paint removers.
- Use boric acid to control cockroaches and ants instead of toxic pesticides.
- Use traps instead of poisons to control mice.
- Dispose of unwanted paint, pesticides, solvents, cleansers and potentially hazardous household products at your local Household Hazardous Waste Collection Facility - never down the drain or in the trash.

Excerpted from The Central Contra Costa Sanitary District PIPELINE, Fall 2009