

What is a community swap?

A community swap is an excellent way for a community to efficiently use up toxic household chemicals. During a community swap event, participants bring usable, leftover household chemicals to a central collection area. There, volunteers and participants sort and distribute the products among members of the community based on need. For example, one neighbor may donate a half pint of pink paint for a quarter can of wood stain.

Why is efficient household chemical use so important?

Household chemicals can be toxic to humans and to the environment. These chemicals are often emptied into sewers, poured into waterways, or dumped directly onto the ground. Often, they are thrown into the trash, ending up in landfills. From there, they can contaminate ground and surface water. During transport, they pose a health threat to collectors and the public.



Household chemicals loaded into a vehicle for a community swap in Rome, Georgia.

What are the benefits of a community swap?

A community swap is a highly effective way to deal with leftover household chemicals because:

- It's good for the environment and helps protect human health from chemical exposure.
- It's the easiest and least expensive way to use up household chemicals.
- It can reduce the amount of leftover household chemicals that end up in landfills.
- It reduces the risk of poisoning to children and pets.
- It provides a source for donations of leftover products to community causes and organizations.
- With volunteer help, it is inexpensive to organize and hold.

What can be swapped?

- Paints, stains, sealants
- Cleaning products
- Pesticides
- Lawn care chemicals
- Automotive supplies
- Aerosols
- Computers, monitors, and other electronics
- Batteries
- Caulks and glues



Can I start a community swap program?

Community swaps are usually organized by community members, civic groups, or local businesses. You can obtain support and sponsorship from local civic associations such as environmental groups and youth organizations, and government agencies like the city/county recreation or sanitation department. If you are interested in starting a community swap, see *For More Information* on the back of this brochure.

Steps to starting your own community swap program

1. *Learn the facts about household hazardous waste.*
2. *Form a team of community members.*
3. *Design the program as a team.*
4. *Obtain support from local organizations and government agencies.*
5. *Find creative methods to advertise.*
6. *Find an ideal time and place to hold a community swap program.*

Factors to consider when organizing a community swap

When implementing a community swap program, you need to use proper health and safety precautions while household chemicals are being examined, sorted, and distributed. These activities should always be conducted outdoors. People handling the products should always wear heavy cotton gloves. Always avoid keeping all products in direct sunlight or near heat sources.

Some products are not suitable for a community swap, or are not designed for reuse. Participants need to dispose of them properly as hazardous waste. Products that are not suitable to swap include:

- Agricultural pesticides
- Products that are expired
- Products with damaged packaging
- Products not in the original containers
- Products with no directions for use or with an unreadable label
- Products that are unidentifiable
- Any product that looks contaminated in any way
- Any non-consumer products such as industrial or specialty products designed for commercial use

Be sure to plan for storage, disposal, or donation of products that are not swapped or donated. Leftover household chemicals can be disposed of properly at a recycling or municipal landfill facility in your area. For proper disposal, double bag the products in clear plastic bags and label them as household chemicals.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Chemical Hazards Program
GEORGIA DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH
(404) 657-6534
www.health.state.ga.us/programs/hazards

Georgia Department of Community Affairs
(800) 736-1155
www.dca.state.ga.us

Pollution Prevention Assistance Division (P2AD)
GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
(404) 651-5120 or (800) 685-2443
www.p2ad.org

The WATER Foundation
(800) 944-3764
www.bogfrog.com/paintswap.htm

Earth 911
<http://georgia.earth911.org>

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COMMUNITY SWAP PROGRAMS

Using Up Hazardous Household Chemicals



CHEMICAL HAZARDS PROGRAM

Environmental Health and Injury
Prevention Branch

DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH

