

Hazardous materials disposal in Pinellas County

June 14, 2021

You spend an entire afternoon cleaning out your garage or storage shed, tidying things up, making a few repairs around the house, and throwing junk garbage into the curbside pickup bin. After a few hours, that bin is more than full, so you start bagging what's left over.

Before you're done, though, there's entire shelves of paint, thinner, and lacquer. Now out of bags to wrap those cans up, you're simply too tired and ready to be done to run up to the store to get more lawn bags and decide to just stack those cans by the curb. Trash day comes and goes, but the paint, thinner, and lacquer remain.

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Identifying Hazardous Materials

The reason you're local trash collection didn't collect those cans is because that stuff isn't considered household waste. Those things are hazardous materials and won't be thrown into the garbage truck because they are toxic. You've just learned that not all trash is equal and there it will stay until you properly dispose of it.

Pinellas County Utilities operates the Household Electronics and Chemical Collection Center (HEC3) as a permanent disposal location for hazardous household waste. Pinellas County residents are invited to bring their unwanted electronics and chemicals to the center. —

Pinellas County Utilities (<http://www.pinellascounty.org/utilities/swapshop.htm>)

Basically, anything that will get left behind by the local waste collection agency is anything containing warnings on their labels such as "poison," "danger," "caution," or "warning." That means you're stuck with that stuff until you dispose of it properly. If you try to bury those cans under household garbage or bulk trash, if noticed by the pickup crew, you'll likely be receiving a note, maybe even a fine, for doing so.



How to Dispose of Hazardous Materials in Pinellas County

You still need to rid yourself of those cans and now, you're wondering how. Well, there are a few ways to get rid of hazardous materials in Pinellas County, and, the good news is, if still in usable condition, can be put to use. It's the perfect solution, you get rid of what you don't want while someone else gets what they need. Here are your disposal options:

- **Use leftover paint for other projects.** Instead of trying to get rid of paint, use it up on other projects. There's likely something that can use a fresh coat around the house.
- **Drop-off paint containers at the HEC3 facility.** Take those paint cans to the Household Electronics and Chemical Collection Center, or HEC3 center, also known as the Swap Shop.
- **Donate your paint.** Give your paint to Habitat for Humanity or another charitable organization in need of construction supplies. You can also post a free Craigslist ad and give it away to someone else to use.

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A helpful tip to keep yourself from facing this predicament again is to buy only what you need. Before you take-on a painting project, determine how much you'll need and go from there.

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