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## Disposal Problems: Down the Drain

Wastewater treatment plants, community and private septic systems all use biological processes to breakdown sewage. If you live in Bozeman, your household sewage is piped to the City's wastewater treatment plant. Household chemicals disposed of down the drain can disrupt the treatment plant's process for breaking down sewage. The potential outcome is untreated sewage entering the East Gallatin River.

If you are connected to a public sanitary sewer system in Amsterdam, Belgrade, Big Sky, Churchill, Manhattan, Three Forks or West Yellowstone then your wastewater is transported to a wastewater lagoon system. Again, these systems may not be able to completely breakdown many household hazardous wastes. The result is some chemicals and untreated sewage may pass through the system and enter local surface waters (like the Gallatin and Madison Rivers) or seep into the ground water.

Most other residents in the County are on community or individual septic systems. Household chemicals can destroy the bacteria that make a septic system work. If the septic system becomes damaged, then household chemicals and untreated sewage can seep into the soil and contaminate the ground water. This is the same ground water used for drinking. These chemicals may also damage your septic system, requiring costly repairs.

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### References

- Household Chemicals and the Environment: A household hazardous waste fact sheet.* Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. 1993.
- Household HazWaste: Reduction as your first choice.* Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. PUB-SW-738 95.
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*Helping the residents of the Gallatin Valley protect, preserve and improve our surface water and ground water resources.*

## Gallatin Local Water Quality District

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# Household Chemicals, Disposal, and the Environment

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## Disposal of Household Hazardous Waste—Why the Concern?

Many homes in the Gallatin Valley have cupboards and garages that contain some type of household chemical product—drain cleaners, spot removers, motor oil, furniture polish, oven cleaners, weed killer, bleach...just to name a few.

In an effort to make our lives easier, we turn to these products when it comes time to do our

daily chores. Unfortunately, when these products are not used up or disposed of properly, they pose a serious threat to the health of our families and the environment. Many of these household products contain the same chemicals that are strictly regulated as industrial waste. While each individual home in the Gallatin Valley may have only small quantities of these household products, collectively, the amount of waste adds up quickly.



*Household hazardous wastes that are disposed of improperly can contaminate our drinking water supplies.*

## Disposal Problems

What do you do with an old can half-full of paint? How do you dispose of household cleaning solutions that, for whatever reason, you have never used up? When the expiration date has passed on that container of weed killer, how do you dispose of it?

If your answer is "pour it down the drain", or "throw it in the trash", then you could be contaminating the drinking water of your family, friends and neighbors.



*Unused or unwanted household chemicals are considered hazardous when they pose a threat to our environment and us.*

Sometimes, these wastes enter the environment directly by being poured down storm drains and street gutters simply because people don't think of the consequences. All of these improper disposal methods can lead to contamination of ground water and surface water. The water we all depend on for drinking, bathing and recreational use.



## Disposal Problems: In the Trash

In Gallatin County, household and commercial garbage is taken to the Bozeman or Logan landfills. If household hazardous wastes have been disposed of in the trash, these products can seep into ground water and contaminate drinking water supplies.

## Disposal Problems: On the Ground

A major portion of Gallatin County's population relies upon ground water as their sole drinking water source. When household chemicals are dumped on the ground, some of them can seep through the soil and contaminate the ground water, polluting drinking water wells.

## Disposal Problems: In Storm Sewers

Storm sewers carry rainwater and snowmelt from our streets, parking lots, sidewalks, and driveways directly to our streams and rivers. The water that travels through the storm sewers is not treated. Dumping household chemicals into a storm sewer is like dumping them directly into Bozeman Creek or another local stream or river.

