



Earlier this year, you may have received communications regarding the University of Regina's commitment to dispose of aged and disused (“legacy”) chemicals on campus. It is just as important to take a look at all hazardous materials in our homes as well.

Are there materials that have passed their shelf life?
Are bottles degrading and posing an additional hazard?

LET’S TAKE A LOOK!



How Old is that Bleach?

Bleach (sodium hypochlorite) is a common household disinfectant, but did you know that it degrades over time? Bleach starts to degrade after six months and is generally considered expired after one year. Even with proper storage (keeping it in the original container, tightly closed, away from sunlight) bleach will become 20% less effective as each year goes by. Keep this mind when using bleach to disinfect surfaces, as it may not be as effective as you think! For more information on the age of your bleach, click [here](#).

Old Medications

Have you checked your medicine cabinet lately? Consider going through medications and disposing of any that are no longer used and/or expired as part of your regular spring cleaning. Keeping unused or leftover medications can increase the likelihood that they are accidentally ingested by kids or pets.

As with all hazardous products, the guiding principle should be to dispose of anything that is not actively needed.





Mercury

Be mindful of any household products that may contain mercury. Do you have an old mercury thermometer? It may work just fine but the risk of keeping it is enough to justify purchasing a new one.

Some old appliances may have mercury switches in them, like thermostats, pilot light sensors, space heaters, etc. [Click here](#) for a list of other items that may contain mercury.

Degraded Containers

Even if a chemical itself is not expired or degraded, the container holding it might be showing signs of wear. Many leaks and spills have occurred as a result of old containers cracking, or rusting through. Go through your garage chemicals and cleaning supplies to check for signs of container degradation: rust, cracked lids, bulging or sunken-in containers, discoloured plastic.



Batteries



Batteries contain hazardous materials that are at greater risk of leaking as the battery ages or is depleted. Nickel-cadmium (Ni-Cd) batteries are becoming less available as a rechargeable battery, however you may still have devices around your home that contain this type of battery.

Cadmium is very toxic and extremely harmful to the environment (which is why they have been replaced by NiMH batteries) and must be disposed of properly. Similarly, vehicle batteries (typically lead-acid) are extremely corrosive when ruptured.

Avoid accumulating depleted batteries and mixing different battery types, as this also increases the risk of leaking or rupture. As with any hazardous material, it is best to not keep or store them if you do not need them. Recycle old batteries and do not throw them in the trash. If you discover a battery that is leaking or ruptured, do not touch the residue!

Disposing of Household Hazardous Materials

A number of cities (including Regina) host household hazardous waste drop off days to allow residents an opportunity for safe disposal of hazardous materials. Hazardous materials are not safe to dispose of in regular garbage bins or down the drain.



For more information on upcoming Household Hazardous Waste Days in Regina, click [here](#).

Many retail stores have recycling drop-off bins for batteries and fluorescent lights (which contain mercury) and pharmacies will generally accept old and expired medications.