**Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection**
 **Household Hazardous Products Action Plan**

**August 6, 2025**

**BACKGROUND**

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection’s (MassDEP) Solid Waste Master Plan prioritizes reducing toxicity in the solid waste stream by expanding access and increasing collection opportunities for Household Hazardous Products (HHP), as well as implementing manufacturer and/or extended producer responsibility (EPR) programs for high profile materials. Municipal and regional government officials have shared a number of concerns with MassDEP regarding the system for managing HHP in Massachusetts including:

* Inadequate collection, management and disposal infrastructure
* Limited collection and drop-off options for residents, particularly locations with ongoing year-round access
* Rapidly rising costs for municipal and regional program managers
* Need for more data and information on HHP collection and disposal

As outlined in the *1996 Massachusetts Draft Plan for Managing Hazardous Materials from Households and Small Businesses*, HHP can be divided into two broad categories: high-volume products and low-volume products. The high-volume, typically less toxic, product category would be managed through ongoing local collection programs provided by both municipal and private entities. High volume/low-hazard waste categories include, but are not limited to:

* Automotive supplies - Antifreeze, autobody filler, grease, brake and transmission fluid, waste oil and filters
* Propane tanks
* Paint- Latex and oil
* Mercury containing devices - Fluorescent lamps, thermostats, and thermometers
* Miscellaneous - Safety flares, lithium-ion/nickel cadmium batteries, nicotine vaping devices and e-cigarettes

The low-volume products, often with higher toxicity, would be collected at public or private HHP events and permanent collection centers. This combination of collection methods will increase residential and small business access to services in the most cost-effective manner. Low-volume/high-hazard HHP categories include, but are not limited to:

* Garden supplies - Pesticides, fertilizers, herbicides, and other poisons
* Household cleaners - Ammonia, chlorine bleach, drain openers, oven cleaners
* Flammable liquids - Gasoline and solvents
* Hobby supplies - Chemistry sets, photographic chemicals, pool chemicals
* Health and beauty supplies - Hair dyes, nail polish and remover
* Home improvement supplies - Paint thinners, glues, stains, strippers, varnish, solvents, adhesives

Some universal and solid waste materials may be considered hazardous (once collected) due to other hazardous attributes (e.g., potentially flammable/combustible) or damage to the item (e.g., smashed CRT/television); whereas other wastes may not actually be hazardous but are often managed together with other hazardous wastes or hazardous materials (e.g., latex paint).

**GOALS**

The goals of this plan are to advance the proper management of unwanted or leftover household hazardous products (HHPs) from households and small businesses, while reducing/eliminating the amount of HHPs used in favor of less toxic products.

HHPs include household products that are purchased in stores or online and are used in our homes, garages, and gardens and are labeled “caution”, “danger”, ‘warning”, “poisonous”, “reactive”, “corrosive”, or “flammable”. Although we are often surrounded by many chemicals in our daily lives, it is easy to forget that these common products can be extremely harmful to human health and the environment.

Working in collaboration with municipal and regional governments, hazardous product service providers, and other stakeholders, MassDEP seeks to:

* Protect public health and the environment from mismanagement of HHPs,
* Increase public awareness about the proper disposal/recycling of leftover/unwanted products, HHP collection opportunities, and potential dangers of storing hazardous waste beyond its shelf life,
* Address public demand for increased collection of wastes considered to be dangerous,
* Ensure adequate collection, recycling, and disposal infrastructure to manage HHPs,
* Reduce costs associated with the management of HHPs,
* Increase participation rates to effectively capture more HHPs for proper disposal, and
* Educate and promote reduction in the use of HHPs.

Although this plan’s intended purpose is to address HHPs on a statewide basis, particular attention will be given to environmental justice and other communities which are underserved due to a lack of recycling and disposal options. These communities will be prioritized for expanded access to these services and education.

**EVALUATION**

Through MassDEP’s annual Solid Waste and Recycling Surveys, which are submitted by municipalities as a condition of the Sustainable Materials Recovery Program (SMRP), the Department obtains information on residential access to municipal services for the proper management of HHPs. Table 1 (page 10) shows the percentage of households and population with access to permanent collection opportunities for many of the high volume HHPs. Table 2 shows the percentage of households (82%) and population (78%) with access to at least one HHP collection event per year (targeting low volume HHPs). This includes populations with access to permanent collection centers. In addition to these municipal and regional government collection programs, there are many collection locations available through private entities. These include drop-off locations for lithium and other household batteries, mercury containing products, used motor oil and other automotive wastes, and electronics. Although not a complete list of these private collection efforts, MassDEP works with municipalities and service providers to list their collection locations on our Beyond the Bin webpage.

MassDEP will continue working with both internal and external stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of HHP management in the state, including analyzing data for:

* Annual municipal solid waste and recycling survey results,
* Municipal one-day events and permanent collection centers data,
* Evaluating waste characterization and reported state contract data,
* Visits to MassDEP webpages to evaluate effectiveness of outreach materials,
* Identification of privately operated collection locations; and
* Technical assistance calls and emails.

**HHP ACTION PLAN STRUCTURE**

This Action Plan is divided into the following four sections:

**Expansion of Low Volume/High Toxicity Collection**

MassDEP will continue to provide funding for the establishment of permanent collection centers (both regional and municipal) through SMRP – Municipal Application.[[1]](#footnote-2) MassDEP’s Recycling Dividends Program (RDP) encourages HHP collection activities by awarding points/funding which can be used to hold one-day collection events, reciprocal collection events, and/or partner with or operate a permanent collection center. MassDEP Municipal Assistance Coordinators (MACs) will help communities establish and contract for these services. MassDEP regional staff will assist communities in permitting permanent regional centers and one-day collection events. MassDEP also will work with interested private entities to establish collection centers for these materials.

**Expansion of High Volume/Low Toxicity Collection**

Currently, collection programs for high-volume product categories focus on cost effective collection of these products that are generated frequently and in relatively high volume. MassDEP will continue to support these programs to increase the frequency of collection opportunities for these commonly generated products beyond what is available through one-day collection events that accept all hazardous materials. This approach enables higher levels of participation and capture of more materials. Collecting these materials separately, on a more frequent and ongoing basis, can reduce the volume of these materials collected at one-day events, which will make those programs more cost-effective.

**Education/Outreach/Training**

MassDEP will also work to make it easier for residents and businesses to find information on the public and private opportunities to properly manage HHPs and promote the use of low or non-toxic alternatives. We will work with municipalities to share information and outreach materials, provide training on how to establish local collection programs, and encourage more participation by residents and businesses.

**Encourage Purchase of Low/Non-Toxic Alternatives**

Promoting alternative Environmentally Preferred Products (EPPs) rather than those that are higher toxicity can reduce household hazardous waste generation and disposal. This includes promotion to residents and businesses about alternatives and encouraging municipalities to pilot and incorporate less toxic alternatives into their operations.

In the tables below, three different timeframes are listed in the “Timeframe” column:

* Ongoing
* Shorter term – to be implemented within 1-2 years
* Longer term – to be implemented within 3-5 years

|  |
| --- |
| Expansion of Low Volume/High Toxicity Collection  |
| Goal | Elements | Timeframe | Notes |
| **Expand Access to Permanent Collection Facilities** | Continue to provide grant funding to municipalities/regional groups to establish permanent collection centers | Ongoing | * 11 permanent centers are operational in MA.
* Planning for South Shore Recycling Cooperative’s (SSRC) new regional center is in progress
* Planning for new regional center in Lawrence is in progress.
 |
| Work with hazardous waste companies to expand [private permanent collection opportunities](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/safely-manage-hazardous-household-products). | Shorter Term | * Determine whether necessary to streamline permitting process at 310 CMR 30.393
* Provide grants and loan funding to support infrastructure development
 |
| Review annual data for effectiveness and identify gaps in coverage and accessibility | Ongoing | * Review access, convenience, and effectiveness of collection coverage with particular emphasis on EJ communities
 |
| **Encourage/expand one-day event reciprocal agreements** | Municipal Assistance Coordinator ([MAC](https://www.mass.gov/guides/massdep-municipal-assistance-coordinators)) assistance with support and coordination of regional events | Ongoing | * Increase frequency and open operation hours of scheduled events.
* Expand accessibility for non-driving residents in urban and rural areas
 |
| MassDEP to provide technical assistance on event permits, reciprocal agreements, and streamline the approval processes | Shorter Term |  |
| Include Very Small Quantity Generators (VSQG) | Shorter Term | * Increase off season collection opportunities and access
* Provide pick up options to increase accessibility
 |

|  |
| --- |
| Expansion of High Volume/Low Toxicity Collection  |
| Goal | Elements | Timeframe | Notes |
| **Promote expanding Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) initiatives and expand waste categories** | Support paint EPR in Massachusetts  | Ongoing | * Engage through MassDEP Commissioner's office on the [Extended Producer Responsibility Commission](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/extended-producer-responsibility-commission?_gl=1*u67dru*_ga*NjAyOTY4MDk1LjE2MjE1NjE1OTM.*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*MTc0NDI5Nzg0Ni43Mi4wLjE3NDQyOTc4NDYuMC4wLjA)
* Assess effectiveness of paint EPR in other states
 |
| Support lithium battery EPR in Massachusetts | Shorter Term | * Engage through MassDEP Commissioner's office on the [Extended Producer Responsibility Commission](https://www.mass.gov/info-details/extended-producer-responsibility-commission?_gl=1*u67dru*_ga*NjAyOTY4MDk1LjE2MjE1NjE1OTM.*_ga_MCLPEGW7WM*MTc0NDI5Nzg0Ni43Mi4wLjE3NDQyOTc4NDYuMC4wLjA)
* Assess effectiveness of lithium battery EPR in other states
 |
| Assess other EPR programs that address HHPs  | Longer Term | * Determine applicability in Massachusetts
* Do research and make recommendations to EPR for additional HHPs, such as Vermont’s law
 |
| **Use of statewide HHP collection contract available through Operational Services Division (OSD)** | * Publicize through SMRP, MACs, MMA, MassDEP website availability of statewide government contract (New contract WMR001 effective July 1, 2025)
* Publicize vendor list on WMR001
 | Shorter Term | Statewide contract WMR001to provide resources and services for the collection of HHP, including:* MassDEP in partnership with OSD to provide training and information on statewide contract for local government staff
* Collection services for hazardous waste and one-day collection events for:
* Electronics
* Motor oil, car batteries, filters, and antifreeze
* Universal Waste (e.g., mercury and batteries)
* Sharps and pharmaceutical waste
* Lithium-ion batteries, tanks, and cylinders
* Low volume-high toxicity waste
 |
| **Pursue expansion of collection categories of Municipal Waste Combustor (MWC) and Material Separation Plans (MSP)** | MWC MSPs have funded Universal Waste Sheds that collect mercury-added products (categories in the next planning cycle may include lithium-ion battery collection/propane tanks/etc.) | Shorter Term |  |
| **MassDEP Grant Initiatives** | * SMRP: Grants offered for Universal Waste Sheds and Paint Sheds – Identify additional capital investment needs for other materials and infrastructure (e.g., waste oil tanks).
* Recycling Dividends Program (RDP): Incentive grant that includes category for CHARM (Center for Hard to Recycle Materials).
 | Ongoing | * Continue providing grants to eligible municipalities for Universal Waste Sheds, including collection of mercury-added products, batteries, etc.
* Mercury collection is required to earn CHARM points. Optional CHARM items include automotive waste, fire extinguishers, 20lb propane tanks, household batteries, paint, and solar panels. This list may be amended in future grant cycles.
 |
| Technical Assistance grants for HHP center planning (also develop guidance for HHP center planning) and staff training) | Shorter Term | Develop guidance for HHP center planning and staff training |
| **Consider/expand support for infrastructure/****equipment to accept and manage these materials.**  | * Reduce, Reuse, Repair Micro-Grants
* Recycling & Reuse Business Development Grants (RBDG)
 | Ongoing | E.g., RBDG grant to Recolor to expand operations for paint reuse. |

|  |
| --- |
| Education/Outreach/Training |
| Goal | Elements | Timeframe | Notes |
| **Provide Training to Municipal Officials** | MassDEP to provide technical assistance on event permits, reciprocal agreements, and streamline approval processes | Shorter term | * Develop guidance on to create and maintain HHP permanent collection
* MassDEP can provide training to be recorded or replicated by municipalities
 |
| In-person meetings/conferences to encourage networking and sharing lessons learned (e.g., Barnstable County) | Longer term | * Include regional planning agencies
* Consider holding an HHW summit to connect and engage decision makers, state contract vendors, operations staff
* Develop case studies of success stories and cost effective partnerships/programs
 |
| **Update MassDEP websites**  | Assess current information and expand informative resources for residents and municipalities  | Shorter term | * Update resources
* User friendly
* Provide assistive services and translation of as many resources as possible
* Expand safety management practices
* Align with other state and federal departments/agencies
 |
| **Assist the general public on disposal and proper management opportunities** | Direct assistance through MassDEP email portal for resident questions | Shorter term |  |
| MassDEP, MWCs, and other organizations can provide training to their residents as to reduce improper disposal and answer questions from the general public | Shorter term | * Including guidance documents, presentations, MassDEP HHP email address
* Include QR codes to reference website on guidance documents
* Appropriate point-of-contact at MassDEP to address questions/concerns
* Diversify educational opportunities through social media, video and audio
* Reach out to small businesses, trade associations, unions, business groups, vocational schools, MMA
* Partner with local health departments to include information on their websites
 |
| Promote Voluntary Private Collection Efforts | Ongoing | * Thermostat Recycling Corporation (TRC)
* Call2Recycle
* Beyond the Bin/Recycle Smart
* Consumer Technology Association
* Retailers
* Recycling Works in Massachusetts for small business access
 |
| Expand knowledge of proper latex paint disposal and recycling/encourage paint recycling programs | Shorter term |  |
| **Encourage disaster preparedness**  | Encourage municipalities to incorporate HHP management options into disaster management plans | Shorter term | * Coordinate with MEMA and state disaster debris management contractor to provide workshops
 |

|  |
| --- |
| Encourage Purchase of Low/Non-Toxic Alternatives |
| Goal | Elements | Timeframe | Notes |
| **Expand adoption of EPPs within state and municipalities** | Work with OSD to make EPPs more readily accessible/available | Ongoing | E.g., purchase reclaimed paint for schools |
| Consider modifying RDP points to increase incentives | Longer term |  |
| Consider grants to pilot and test recycled content products (e.g., recycled paint) | Longer term |  |
| Continue to require EPP purchasing policies with annual SMRP application requirements | Ongoing |  |
| **Encourage consumers to switch to less hazardous alternative products** | Encourage retailers to provide HHP alternatives and encourage consumer use/switch to viable alternatives | Longer term |  |

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 1: Local Household Hazardous Waste Collection Coverage** |
| Waste Category ​ | Households with access\* ​ | % Households with access ​ | Population with access \*\* ​ | % Population with access ​ |
| Waste/Used Engine Oil ​ | 1,035,417 | 41% | 2,643,675 | 38% |
| Used Oil Filters ​ | 734,731 | 29% | 1,849,101 | 26% |
| Auto Batteries ​ | 1,144,573 | 45% | 2,869,733 | 41% |
| Anti-freeze ​ | 844,422 | 33% | 2,128,953 | 30% |
| Lithium Batteries ​ | 1,304,336 | 52% | 3,267,090 | 47% |
| Propane Tanks (1 lb) ​ | 1,095,390 | 43% | 2,796,907 | 40% |
| Propane Tanks (20 lbs) ​ | 1,089,323 | 43% | 2,789,257 | 40% |
| Latex Paint ​ | 658,523 | 26% | 1,681,897 | 24% |
| Oil Based Paint ​ | 651,083 | 26% | 1,643,816 | 24% |
| Fluorescent Lamps/CFLs ​ | 1,365,367 | 54% | 3,455,788 | 49% |
| Thermostats ​ | 1,420,335 | 56% | 3,600,690 | 52% |
| Thermometers  ​ | 1,403,650 | 56% | 3,560,145 | 51% |
| Other Hg products ​ | 1,365,283 | 54% | 3,470,876 | 50% |

|  |
| --- |
| **Table 2: One-Day Events/Regional Centers** |
| Collection Type | # of Municipalities | Households with access | % Households with access | Population with access | % of Population with access |
| One-day events/Regional Centers | 183 | 2,191,086 | 82% | 5,423,321 | 78%  |

1. SMRP also includes an option for a single municipality to develop a permanent collection site. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)