

Gov. Branstad designates Jan. 18-24 as Hazardous Materials Awareness Week

DES MOINES – Governor Terry Branstad has designated the week of Jan. 18-24, 2015, as Hazardous Materials Awareness Week in Iowa.

This year marks the fourth year that the Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEMD) and the Iowa Emergency Response Commission (IERC) will recognize the third full week in January as Hazardous Materials Awareness Week. The goal of the week is to provide Iowans a better understanding about hazardous materials, their proper use, storage, and disposal, and the emergency response actions that can help minimize unnecessary accidents and exposure.

“We often concentrate our efforts on dealing with forces beyond our control when it comes to the safety of our families,” said Stefanie Bond, public information officer for Iowa HSEMD. “It’s easy to forget about the hidden dangers that are lurking in our own homes – where we do have control.”

Nearly all households and businesses use products that contain hazardous materials, and hazardous materials are transported on our roadways, railways, and waterways daily. Knowing how to handle such products and how to react during an emergency can reduce the risk of illness, injury or death.

Household hazardous materials

Household hazardous materials (HHMs) are found in most of our homes. These products are either toxic, flammable, corrosive, reactive, or a combination of these properties. HHMs have warning labels that contain the following words: Caution, Danger, Poison, or Warning.

- **Toxic** products are poisonous or cause illness. Examples are household cleaners, paint thinner, pesticides and medication (in certain amounts or for certain people).
- **Flammable** products ignite or burn easily. Examples include paint, paint thinner, and many automotive products.
- **Corrosive** products can eat through other materials. Examples are acid, automotive batteries, and oven, toilet bowl and drain cleaners.
- **Reactive** products can create poisonous vapors when mixed with other products. Some can explode when exposed to heat, air or water, or when shaken.

Some things you can do to ensure your family’s safety:

- Store all household products according to the instructions on the label.
- Keep chemicals and medication out of reach of children.
- **Never** mix household chemicals together!
- Read the instructions on how to dispose of chemicals properly. If possible, recycle or reuse leftover hazardous materials. If you’re not sure how to safely store, or where to dispose specific

materials, visit the **Iowa Department of Natural Resources'** website at www.SafeSmartSolutions.org.

- Put the number of the **Iowa Poison Control** center by the telephone, and save it in your mobile phone: **1-800-222-1222 (Voice/TTY)**
- Hazardous materials can be found outside our homes as well – whether it be in commercial or institutional facilities, or being transported on our roadways, railways or waterways. If you or your family are in the vicinity of an accident that involves hazardous materials, call 9-1-1 immediately. Do not walk into or touch any spilled substances, and follow the instructions of local authorities. Move away from the scene and keep others away as well.

Brochures and fact sheets about hazardous materials safety are available for download on the [Ready Iowa](#) website, and additional information can be found on HSEMD's [Facebook](#) page and [Twitter](#) feed, where updates will be posted throughout the week. The Hazardous Materials Awareness Week logo and a copy of the proclamation signed by the governor can also be found on the [Ready Iowa](#) website.

The Iowa Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management leads, coordinates and supports homeland security and emergency management functions in order to establish sustainable communities and ensure economic opportunities for Iowa and its citizens.

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