

# HAZARDOUS WASTES

BLM

## THE PUBLIC LANDS AND YOUR SAFETY



## ABOUT THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) manages over 261 million acres of public land, primarily in the 11 Western States and Alaska.

These lands provide the public with many resources — raw materials for the energy we depend on and products we buy; food for livestock; habitat for wildlife; and scenic open spaces for hiking, picnicking, camping, hunting, and fishing. Despite being the Nation's largest land management agency, the BLM cannot monitor day-to-day activities on all 261 million acres. Because of this vast acreage, public lands are sometimes a target for illegal activities, such as clandestine drug labs or hazardous waste dumping.

In the interest of safety, this brochure describes what should be done if suspicious substances or containers are found on public lands.

## WHAT ARE HAZARDOUS WASTES?

Hazardous wastes are byproducts of our modern economy. They are leftovers from the manufacturing of many of the things we use at home, at work, in school, or outdoors. If not handled properly, materials such as used motor oil, leftover fertilizer or pesticides, used cleaning fluids, and unused paint can all become hazardous waste.

Hazardous wastes come in many forms—that is liquids, solids, or gas. They are materials that can be harmful to humans or the environment when not handled properly. Hazardous wastes are generally toxic, corrosive, ignitable, or explosive.

### **Toxic**

Can make people or animals sick

### **Corrosive**

Can eat through metal, leather, wood, or cloth and damage the skin or eyes

### **Ignitable**

Can burst into flames

### **Explosive**

Can explode under certain conditions

## WHERE DO HAZARDOUS WASTES COME FROM?

Most hazardous wastes come from agriculture, manufacturing, and the use of many common household products. Companies use chemicals to produce automobiles, shoes, computers, clothes, food, medicines, house paint, and other goods or services we use every day. Often, what is left over from many of these processes can be hazardous. In fact, about 10 to 15 percent of all wastes generated in the United States are hazardous. That is, they can be toxic, corrosive, ignitable, or explosive if not handled properly. Hazardous materials are also used in the illegal manufacture of drugs, such as methamphetamines. Meth labs are a growing hazard both in urban areas and in remote sites on public lands. Such hazards require specially trained crews to dismantle them safely.



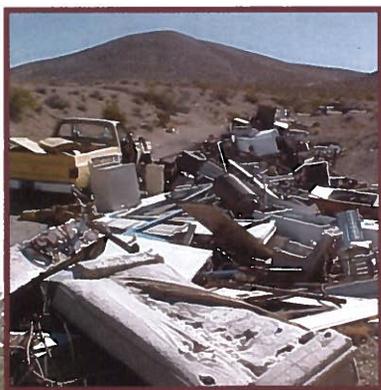
## WHAT DO HAZARDOUS WASTES LOOK LIKE?

Hazardous wastes can occur in solid, liquid, or gas form, and are not always possible to spot by sight alone. A few things to be on the lookout for might include piles of trash or containers; substances leaking from tanks or barrels; substances that smell bad; bags or piles of powder or granulated material; discolored water or other liquids; substances found in boxes marked *flammable* or *explosive*; substances found in containers marked with the traditional poison insignia (skull and crossbones); or any group of unmarked containers, such as plastic jugs or milk cartons.



## WHERE WOULD I FIND HAZARDOUS WASTES?

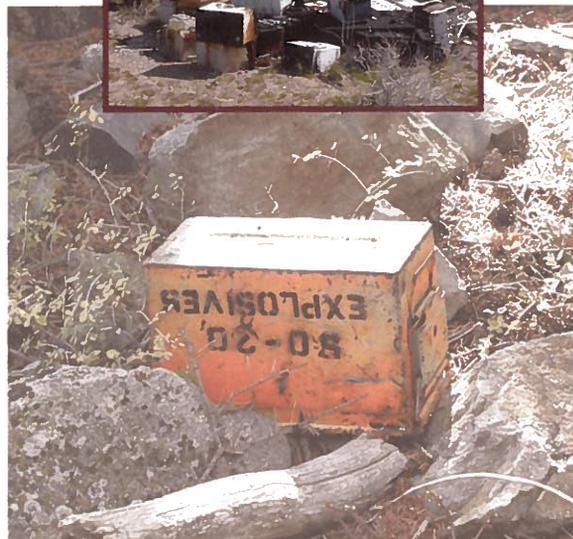
Hazardous wastes might be found anywhere. Unfortunately, until recently, most Americans did not realize that many of the things they threw away were potentially hazardous. Because of this, many hazardous wastes have been dumped in open fields, canyons, old mine sites, mine shafts, the desert, streams and rivers, and even in secluded places in the forests.



## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I THINK I'VE FOUND HAZARDOUS WASTES ON PUBLIC LAND?

If you come upon suspicious substances, *you should not, under any circumstances, go near them or touch them.* The proper authorities can determine what the substance is. You should not endanger yourself or your family by trying to decide if a substance is hazardous or not.

If you think you have come across a hazardous substance, please report the location to the nearest BLM office listed on the back of this brochure. It is important that you be able to describe, to the best of your ability, where the substance was found. *Be sure to keep a safe distance from the material in question.* If you are unsure of how to contact the nearest BLM office, call the local sheriff or police department.



# BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT STATE OFFICES

## **ALASKA**

222 W. 7th Avenue, #13  
Anchorage, AK 99513-7599  
(907) 271-5960

## **ARIZONA**

222 N. Central Ave  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
(602) 417-9200

## **CALIFORNIA**

2800 Cottage Way  
Sacramento, CA 95825  
(916) 978-4400

## **COLORADO**

2850 Youngfield Street  
Lakewood, CO 80215  
(303) 239-3600

## **EASTERN STATES**

7450 Boston Blvd.  
Springfield, VA 22153  
(703) 440-1600

## **IDAHO**

1387 S. Vinnell Way  
Boise, ID 83709  
(208) 373-4000

## **MONTANA**

5001 Southgate Drive  
Billings, MT 59101  
(406) 896-5012

## **NEVADA**

1340 Financial Blvd.  
Reno, NV 89502  
(775) 861-6400

## **NEW MEXICO**

1474 Rodeo Road  
Santa Fe NM 87505  
(505) 438-7424

## **OREGON**

333 SW 1st Avenue  
Portland, OR 97204  
(503) 808-6064

## **UTAH**

324 South State Street  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111  
(801) 539-4021

## **WYOMING**

5353 Yellowstone Road  
Cheyenne, WY 82003  
(307) 775-6011

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