



# AEROSOLS

Many aerosol products are used in the home — hair spray, cooking products, household cleaners and spray paint, to name just a few. If they are disposed of improperly, they can create safety and health problems.

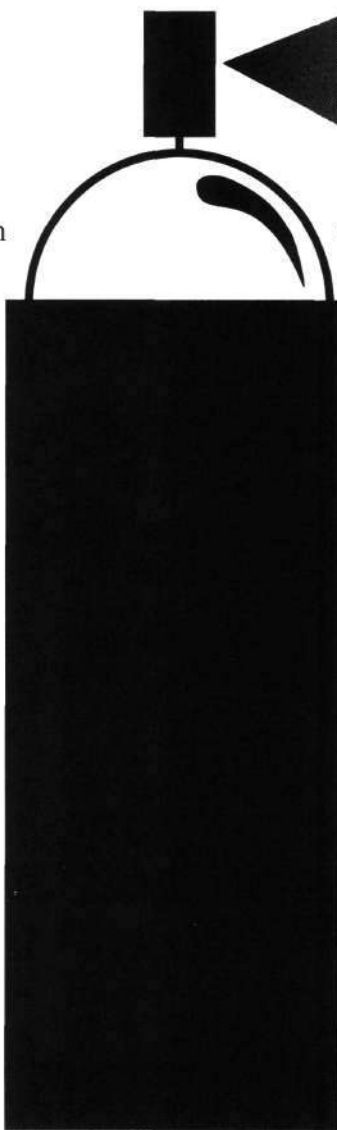
## **HOW CAN AEROSOLS BE A PROBLEM?**

Aerosols use liquid or gaseous propellants. Some aerosols contain organic solvents to dissolve or suspend substances.

Using an aerosol product can present a health threat. The small size of aerosol-propelled particles allows easier absorption into the lungs and bloodstream, significantly increasing the potential for harm from the active and inert product ingredients. Avoid inhaling aerosol vapors, especially if the product contains a solvent or pesticide (e.g., spray paint, carburetor cleaners or wasp spray).

The Consumer Product Safety Commission requires that products containing methylene chloride be labeled to warn consumers that it may pose a cancer threat.

Methylene chloride has been commonly found in aerosol cosmetic products — primarily hair sprays. It may also be used in paint strippers and thinners, wood stain and varnishes, spray paints and primers, spray



shoe polish, household adhesives and adhesive removers, glass frosting and water repellents.

Products purchased before April 1988 may not have a warning label, so read the product label carefully.

## **HOW CAN I PREVENT A PROBLEM?**

When using an aerosol, read the label and follow the directions. A product containing methylene chloride should be used with good ventilation — outdoors or in moving air from a fan or an open window or door. Wear gloves and follow all the instructions.

When spraying something such as paint on large items, start from the bottom and work up, since the heavy vapors settle.

## **HOW DO I DISPOSE OF PARTLY EMPTY CONTAINERS?**

The best option for disposal is to use up the product for its intended purpose. As a last resort, one of the following options may work:

- Donate usable products to service organizations, community support groups, cleaning and maintenance companies, neighbors or friends.
- Bring products to a Household Hazardous Waste col-

**AVOID USING AEROSOLS AROUND CHILDREN!**

lection site. Check with your local health department, city hall or MSU Extension county office to see where and when your community offers a safe collection opportunity.

- If a newly purchased aerosol can becomes inoperable, it should be returned to the place of purchase for a refund.

## **HOW DO I DISPOSE OF EMPTY AEROSOL CANS?**

Aerosol cans contain more than 25 percent recycled steel, so they are recycled and recyclable. Remember that aerosol cans have not contained CFC (chlorofluorocarbon) as a propellant since 1978. When an aerosol can is completely empty, just put it with other cans for recycling. Large plastic lids should be removed and disposed of in the regular trash. There is no need to remove any paper labels or plastic parts attached to the can since these contaminants are burned up when the can is melted down during recycling. More than 600

municipalities around the country recycle 426 million aerosol cans annually.

If your local recyclers refuse aerosol cans, ask them to contact the Steel Recycling Institute (1-800-876-7274) for information about recycling this valuable resource.

Until aerosol cans are recycled in your community, dispose of the completely empty container in the regular trash.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

These days most products packaged in aerosol cans are also packaged in pump containers that are refillable. However, the pump container you purchase may not be the kind of plastic that is recycled in your area. Call your local recycler and find out what types of containers are readily recyclable. Make your choice based on what you can recycle or reuse. In some communities and in some households, aerosol cans may be a better choice. In others, plastic pump containers may be a better choice.



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