



Fact Sheet

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania • Department of Environmental Protection

Pollution Prevention Outside Your Home

Consider some of these useful tips outside your home to prevent pollution, conserve resources and save money!

Windows and Doors

- Ensure windows and doors are sealed properly, and repair them as needed.
- Weather-strip and caulk windows and doors, including storm doors, to prevent heat loss.
- Consider adding storm windows or replacing entire windows with more energy efficient ones.
- In the summer, make sure windows are shaded by using external blinds or awnings and closing curtains, drapes and blinds during the day.

Lighting

- Use programmable timers, daylight sensors or motion sensors to control outdoor and security lighting.
- Use solar powered lighting for outdoor illumination.
- Use lighting fixtures that direct light at the intended target area. Don't pay to light the night sky.

Storage

- Add a concrete pad with a berm beneath your heating oil tank. If it ever leaks, it will be easier to discover.
- Clearly label/mark your well covers, heating oil fill cover, and other pipes/vents in your yard to prevent accidental well contamination.
- Store gasoline, paint thinners, etc. in well-marked, appropriate containers to prevent evaporation and creation of ground level ozone and leaks. Place on a plastic or metal tray to catch leaks as appropriate.
- Dispose of all leftover or unusable chemicals properly according to labels.

Lawn and Lawn Equipment

- Use an electric or manual lawn mower, trimmer and edger instead of a gas-powered model. Uncontrolled air pollutants are released from gas-powered small engines and contribute to smog.

- If you have a gas mower, cut the grass in the morning or evening to minimize the creation of ground level ozone.
- Mow your lawn to three inches to prevent weed growth and slow down speed of grass growth to lessen mowing frequency. Shorter grass does not shade weed seeds and grows faster.
- To improve the quality of your lawn, aerate then thatch your lawn in spring/early summer, then apply compost, organic fertilizer or a slow release fertilizer two times a year in early spring and fall.
- Water only when lawn shows drought stress, then water deeply, providing one inch per week in one or two waterings, preferably in the early morning.
- Never water heavily after spreading fertilizers. The water will carry them to nearby streams and could contaminate the water.
- When applying seed or sod, select high-quality site-appropriate grass types. Contact your County Agricultural Extension Office for assistance in selecting grasses. Also, planting only one type makes it more susceptible to disease.
- Instead of hosing your driveway, sweep it off. It prevents pollutants and trash from seeping into the lawn and saves water.

Garden and Yard

- Grow pest and drought resistant plants, shrubs, and trees such as natives.
- Mix varieties of flowers, shrubs and trees for your yard. Planting only one type makes them more susceptible to disease.
- Steer clear of tree and shrub trunks with mowers and weed whackers.
- Put mulch at tree bases, no deeper than 4 inches, and avoiding the mulch "volcano" – if you can't see where the tree trunk "flares" to meet the ground, you risk fungal disease and loss of trees.

- Avoid pesticides. They are particularly hazardous to children and the elderly. Instead, hand dig and spot treat weeds when possible.
- Only use pesticides like insecticidal soaps and "*Bacillus thuringiensis*" / "Bt."
- Grow composite family flowers for the good insects to land and feed on (such as Queen Anne's lace, daisies, fennel, dill) and to attract birds. Limit pesticide use to attract these insects.
- Use a soil test for garden areas, not just lawns, to determine when/if to fertilize.
- Do not grow the same types of plants (e.g. tomatoes, peppers, eggplant) in the same place each year.
- When watering your plants, use a handheld hose or timer-controlled automatic sprinklers instead of an automatic sprinkler to prevent over-watering.
- Install drip irrigation and/or soaker hose systems on timers to provide controlled amounts of water to garden beds.
- Create your own compost pile in the backyard. You will generate less waste and have your own mulch. Add fruit or vegetable scraps from the kitchen, but avoid meat and bones because they may attract animals.
- Use grass clippings in your garden to prevent weed growth.
- Plant trees around your house to provide shade.

Pesticides

- Physically remove pest from your home. This includes: vacuuming, snap traps, glue boards, and fly swatters.
- Practice good sanitary habits, including keeping lids on trashcans and food containers, and eliminating clutter and standing water.

- Maintain buildings on your property including sheds, barns and garages to minimize pest breeding grounds by caulking cracks and crevices; replacing broken screens; repairing leaky faucets; and weather-stripping doors and windows.
- Avoid storing wood near buildings.
- Closely examine chemical pesticides before purchase and use. First try less toxic chemicals that can be found at local stores such as: boric acid, diatomaceous earth, silica gel, and insecticidal soaps.

Car

- Keep your car properly maintained. Check and clean air filters regularly, replace worn spark plugs, and check fluid levels frequently.
- Carpools and public transportation are great ways to save fuel. Check in your local area for public transportation and within your business or community group to find a carpool.
- Run errands all at once to avoid multiple trips. Walk or ride a bike for short errands.
- Never dump motor oil or antifreeze down your drain, on the ground, down a sewer or storm drain, or in the trash. Instead, recycle it or give it to a local gas station.
- Ensure tires are properly inflated, balanced and aligned and have good tread. Proper tires are safer and can increase gas mileage by five percent in the city and 10 percent on the highway.
- On warm days, use the air conditioner instead of rolling the windows down. Having the windows down builds drag and the car has to work harder to maintain speed.

For more information, visit DEP's website at www.dep.state.pa.us, Keyword: "DEP OETD."

DEP Regional Offices

Southeast Region

2 E. Main St.
Norristown, PA 19401
484-250-5900

Counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia

Southwest Region

400 Waterfront Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15222-4745
412-442-4217

Counties: Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland

Southcentral Region

909 Elmerton Ave.
Harrisburg, PA 17110
717-705-4708

Counties: Adams, Bedford, Berks, Blair, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry and York

Northwest Region

230 Chestnut St.
Meadville, PA 16335-3481
814-332-6899

Counties: Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Elk, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango and Warren

Northeast Region

2 Public Square
Wilkes-Barre, PA 18711-0790
570-826-2511

Counties: Carbon, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Luzerne, Monroe, Northampton, Pike, Schuylkill, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming

Northcentral Region

208 W. Third St., Suite 101
Williamsport, PA 17701
570-327-3675

Counties: Bradford, Cameron, Clearfield, Centre, Clinton, Columbia, Lycoming, Montour, Northumberland, Potter, Snyder, Sullivan, Tioga and Union

