

# Safe Disposal of Household Pharmaceuticals

Wayne Harry, P.E.  
MSW Permits Section  
TCEQ



# Don't Flush It, Trash It!

- Traditional Method
  - Flush It
  - Now found in lakes, rivers.
- New Method
  - Trash it
- Current Desire
  - Collect it
  - Then what?



# Home Pharmaceutical Myth #1

- Are Home Pharmaceuticals a Medical Waste?
- No
- No Pathogen
  - Pathogen - germ, bacteria, virus, protozoa, *infectious agent*, biological agent that can cause a disease in a host.
- Are actually quite sterile



# Home Pharmaceutical Myth #2

- Are Home Pharmaceuticals a Hazardous Waste?
- For the most part - No
- Most home-dispensed pharmaceuticals (drugs) are not hazardous when discarded
  - A few might be when discarded
  - Overall percentage is trivial



# How to Safely Dispose at Home?

- No longer flush!
- Make unusable
  - Dissolve in water, mix with cat litter
  - Mix with coffee grounds, old yogurt, bad cottage cheese
    - Use your imagination!



# What Do Hospitals Do?

- Special Waste
  - 30 TAC 330.3(148) definition
    - (J) drugs, contaminated foods, or contaminated beverages, other than those contained in normal household waste;
  - Collect, package, label
  - Discard in local MSW landfill



# Will Collection Ever Make Cents?

- Perception of a Solution to an Unstated Problem
  - Are MSW Landfills contributors of pharmaceuticals to groundwater?
- Does Not Address Core Issue
  - The human body eliminates drugs
- Perception is Reality
  - The train has left the station



# MSW Disposal – Fail Safely

- Land Disposal is Now Viewed as Failure
  - If we are to fail, fail safely
    - Clay liners
    - Synthetic liners
    - Leachate collection
    - Groundwater monitoring
    - LF gas monitoring
- Diversion is Viewed as Preferred
  - Must still be safe
  - If we fail, is it still safe?





# Final Thoughts

- You may not always have what you want, but you will always have what you've got.
- Don't believe everything you hear.
- Feel free at any time to use common sense.



# Hey! Stop Presenting!

- Questions / Comments
  - Anyone? Anyone?

Wayne Harry  
MSW Permits Section  
(512) 239-6619  
[wharry@tceq.state.tx.us](mailto:wharry@tceq.state.tx.us)

MSW homepage:  
<http://www.tceq.state.tx.us/nav/permits/msw.html>

