

Environmental  
Protection Authority  
Te Mana Rauhi Taiao

# *Keeping people, pets and the environment safe from chemical harm*



# 3

## The EPA: We're here to 'do good'

What we do affects the everyday lives of all New Zealanders.

New Zealand has some unique environments, a unique culture, and a special relationship with tangata whenua (indigenous people).

In doing our work we carefully balance cultural, social, economic, safety and environmental factors to protect the way of life New Zealanders want now, and in the future.'

## Our roles

- Administer nationally significant proposals
- Regulate activities in the Exclusive Economic Zone
- Administer the NZ Emissions Trading Scheme
- Make decisions about New Organisms
- Science Leadership
- Manage chemicals in New Zealand
- Public awareness and community engagement



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***Spot the difference?***

Source: Safekids Aotearoa

Figure 1: Hospitalisations from hazardous substances – by ethnicity and chemical type

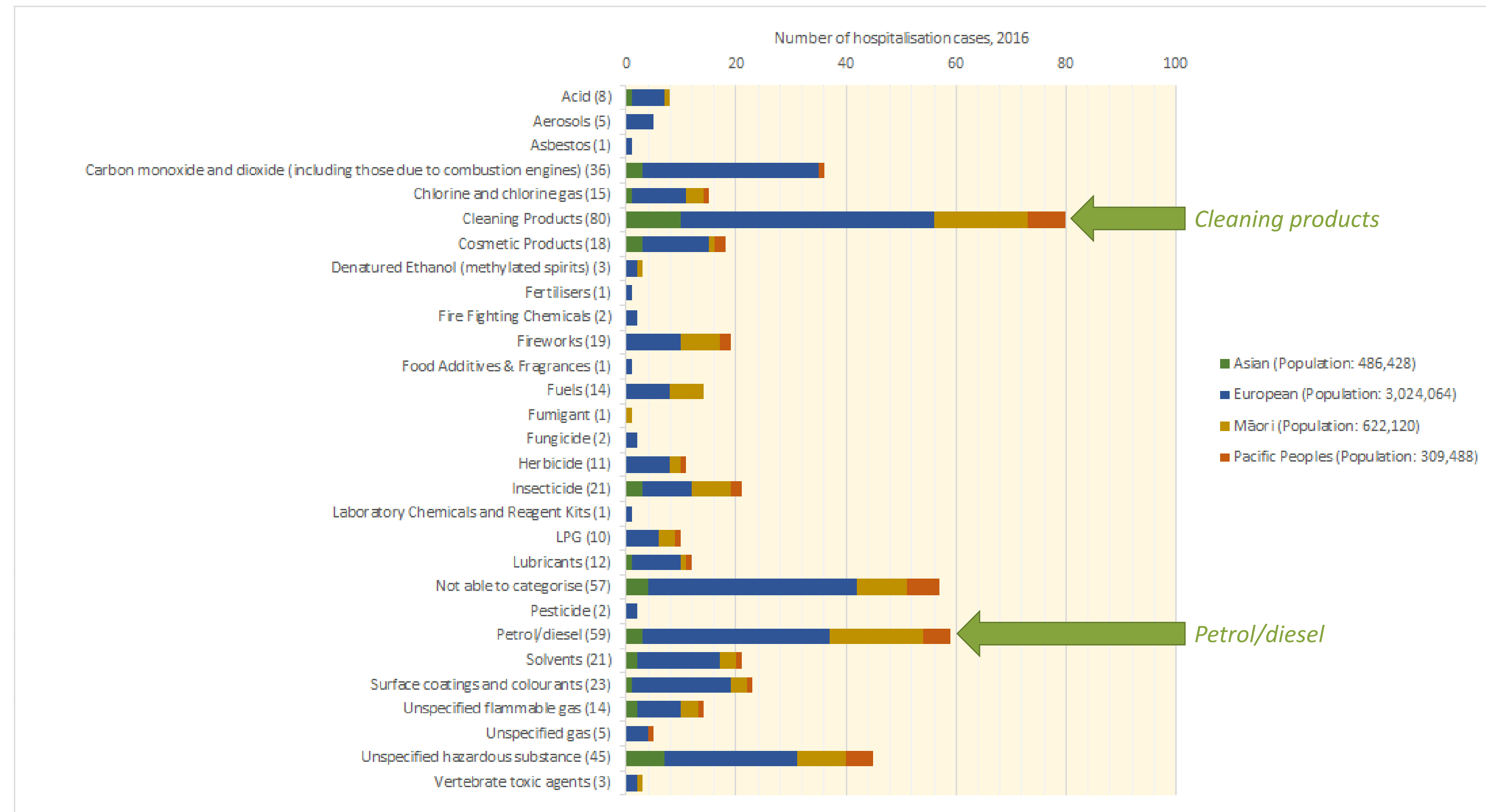
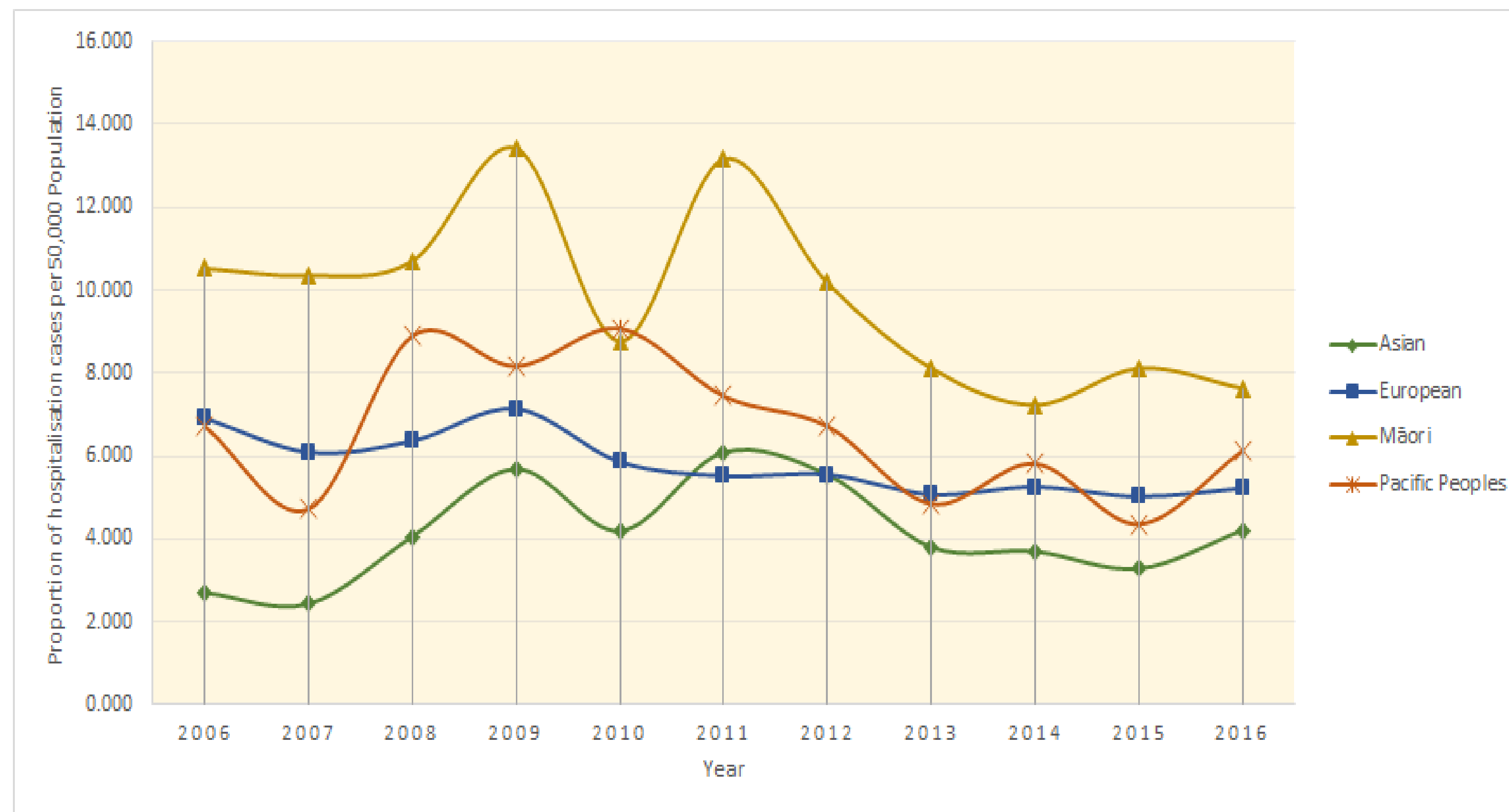


Figure 2: Hospitalisations from hazardous substances – by ethnicity





# Safer Homes

**Safer Homes**  
Kāinga Haumaru

## Using household chemicals safely

Many cleaning and other household items that we use on a daily basis could harm us or the environment if not used properly. This can include those marked as natural, organic or environmentally friendly.

It is important that you use these products correctly to keep you and your whānau, your pets, environment and community, safe and healthy. Just follow these six simple steps to stay safe...

- 1. Always read and follow the instructions**
- 2. Only use household cleaning chemicals as intended and never mix them**
- 3. Close containers properly, lock them up, and keep them out of reach**
- 4. Store your cleaning products in their original containers**
- 5. Use child safety locks on cupboards**
- 6. Dispose of unused cleaning chemicals and empty containers according to label instructions**

For more Safer Homes tips and information visit:  
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**Kāinga Haumaru**  
Safer Homes

## Kia haumaru te whakamahi i ngā matū whare

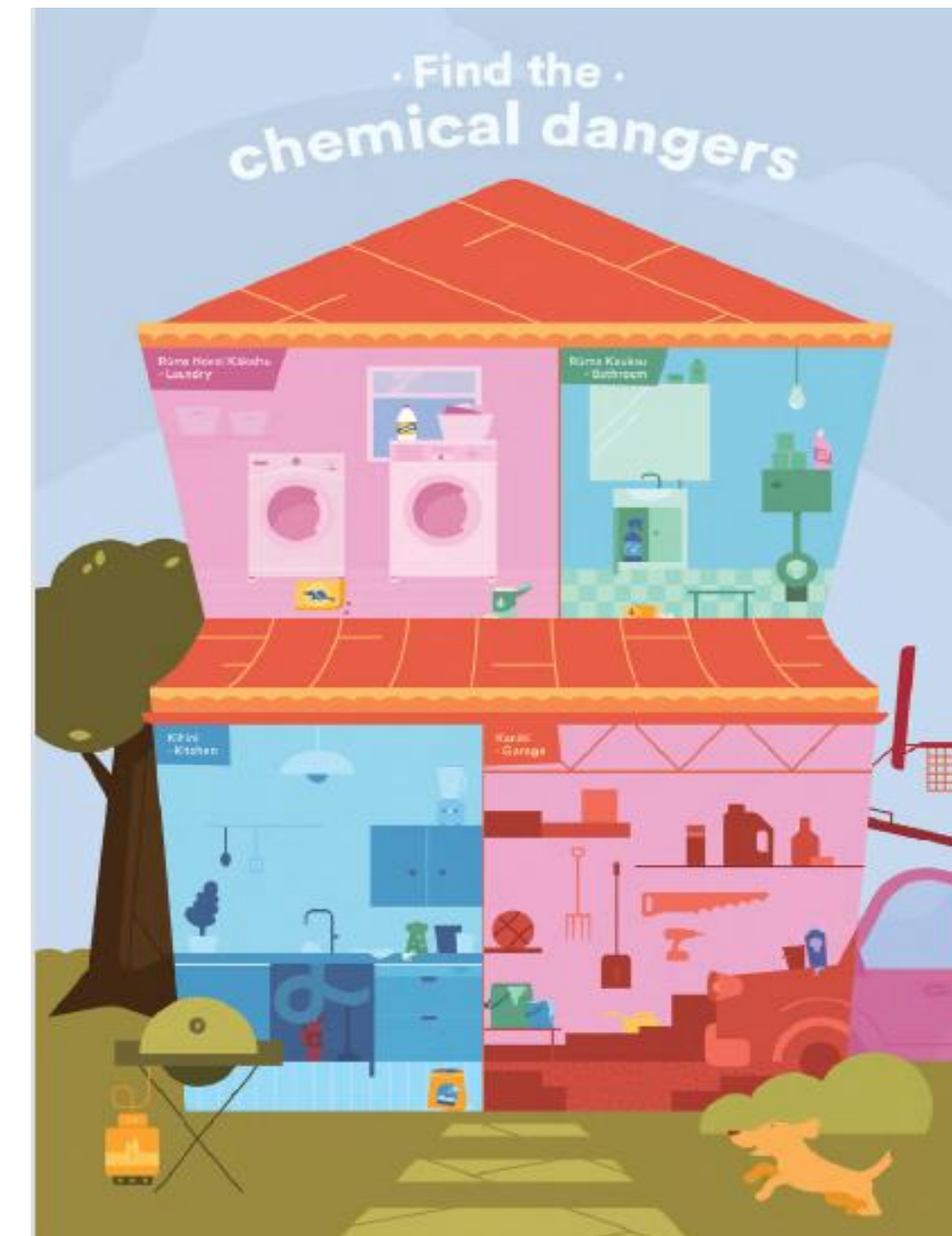
Ki te kore e tika te whakamahi i ngā rawa horoi maha, aho atu rānei, o te whare ka whakamahia i ia rā, ka raru pea tātou, te taiao rānei. Tāe atu pea tōnei ki ngā mea kua tohua he māori, he horomata, he mea atawhai i te taiao rānei.

He mea hiranga kia tika tō whakamahi i ēnei rawa, kia haumaru ai, kia hauora ai hoki tō noho, te noho a tō whānau, a āu mōkai, o tō taiao me tō hapori noho anō hoki. Whāia ēnei hātepe ngāwari e ono e whai ake nei kia haumaru ai te noho...

- 1. I ngā wā katoa, pānuihia, whāia ngā tohutohu**
- 2. Whakamahia ngā matū whare e ai ki ngā tohutohu anake, ā, kaua rawa e korori ki matū anō**
- 3. Āta katia ngā ipu, rakaina, ā, putua kia kore e taea ai te tiki atu**
- 4. Raua ō matū horoi ki ngā ipu timatanga**
- 5. Whakamahia ētahi raka ārai tamariki ki ngā kāpata**
- 6. Whāia ngā tohutohu o te tohu ina ākiriā ngā matū horoi kāore anō kia mahia, ngā ipu kautahanga hoki**

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**Safer Homes**  
Kāinga Haumaru

## Read the label. Lock it up. Keep out of reach.

Many cleaning and other household items that we use every day in our homes, could harm us or the environment if not used properly. It is important that these products are used correctly to keep everyone, and everything, safe and healthy.

Please remind your parents to:

- read the label on the product and follow the instructions
- close containers properly, and
- lock them up or keep them up high, out of reach.

### What was hiding in the house?

1. Rat poison.	8. Fire extinguisher.
2. Bleach.	9. Dishwasher detergent.
3. Laundry powder.	10. Paint.
4. Bathroom cleaner.	11. Petrol.
5. Medicine.	12. Car wash.
6. Toilet cleaner.	13. Gas bottle.
7. Dishwashing liquid.	

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# Community engagement





# Guidance sheets



We use household and garden chemicals and cleaners every day. Beyond helping us get the job done, we rarely give them a second thought. But it's important that they are used properly and stored wisely to minimise the risks they may pose to others, and our environment.

## What are household chemicals?

Although you may not immediately think of them in this way, chemical products (like these listed here) are classified as hazardous substances. They must be used and stored safely. They include:

- household cleaners, like sprays, detergents and washing powders
- garden products, such as weed sprays and pesticides
- cosmetics, like soaps, shampoos, toothpaste, shaving products, insect repellants, sunscreen and make-up
- fuels, such as LPG for barbecues and petrol stored for lawnmowers
- paints, paint thinners and solvents
- fireworks
- face paint and children's art products
- spa and pool chemicals
- poisons, including insecticides and baits for pests and insects
- pet products, such as flea, mite and worm treatments and pet shampoos

## Taking extra care

These products are chemical substances and they need to be handled with care. If you accidentally inhale, ingest or mishandle them, you could get sick. How sick and what symptoms you might experience depend on the type or amount of the substances you've come into contact with. Products labelled as 'organic' and 'environmentally friendly' can also be hazardous if swallowed.



Symptoms may range from skin irritations, sore eyes, and headaches to breathing difficulties, burns, vomiting, and serious or life-threatening conditions.

In case of poisoning, contact the National Poisons Centre immediately on 0800 POISON (0800 764 766).

For a severe reaction to a product, seek medical advice from your doctor or speak with a registered nurse on Healthline on 0800 611 116.

For emergencies, call 111 immediately for an ambulance.

## Read the label

The label has all the information you need to keep yourself safe. For instance, it will list any protective clothing or gear you may need to use, whether the products can be used inside and outside, and any special precautions you may need to take.

Some products will carry the words **Danger**, **Warning**, **Poison** or **Caution** on their label as a warning that you need to take extra care with them. They may also include



Weed killers, pest sprays, fertilisers and other gardening products are considered hazardous substances. Take extra care when using, storing, and disposing of these to protect yourself, others and the environment.

## Know your products

You can take your first step to making your home safer by learning about the gardening products you use. Start by reading the label.

Please remember:

- you should always keep gardening products in their original containers
- 'natural', 'organic', and 'environmentally friendly' products can still be hazardous

Make your home and garden safer by choosing products that are as gentle as possible, and by disposing of old products you don't use anymore. Read the instructions on the label to make sure you dispose of your old products safely, or seek advice from your garden centre.

When you're thinking of buying new products, think about whether the job you want to do could be done another way, such as pulling weeds by hand. If not, seek advice to select the safest and most effective product for the job, for example from the staff at your local store.

## Take care while you garden

Before you get to work in the garden, check the labels of all the products you plan to use to see what you can do to keep yourself and others safe.

- If you are working near or on edible plants, check the label to see how long you need to wait before the plant or vegetable will be safe to eat.
- Wear gloves, and check the label to see if you need other protection, like a facemask or safety glasses.



- Keep products away from your eyes and face, and off your skin.
- Choose a calm day. The wind can blow products into your eyes and face, or onto other people.
- Be very careful if you are working near streams or other water. Many garden products should not be used near water.
- Never pour leftover product down storm water drains.

## When you're finished

After you finish spraying, and put all your products away, what next?

- Follow the instructions on the label, if any when disposing of any used bottles or containers. Never pour unused product down the drain.
- Wash yourself and the clothes you were wearing.
- Wash any other areas that came into unintended contact with the gardening products.



Many household chemical products that you use every day can be harmful, if they aren't used and stored properly. From the dishwasher detergent to the sprays in your garden – store these products carefully to keep your family safe.

## Read the label

We, the EPA, set the rules for the labelling of hazardous products. Always read the label and follow the instructions.

## Keep products in their original containers

Keep household chemicals and cleaners in their original packaging. Never decant them into other containers.

Moving the substance into a different container means you'll lose the safety information printed on the label, which can include emergency numbers, and important first aid information.

Also, some products are sold in special packaging that doesn't react with the substance inside. Others have child-resistant safety lids to prevent children from opening them.

## Child-resistant packages are not child proof

Child-resistant packages make it hard for children to open them, but they are not completely child proof. Make sure you always seal child-resistant packages properly before you put them away. Store your household cleaners and products high up, and if possible in a locked cupboard.



## Top tips

- Keep your household chemical products in their original containers – never transfer them to old food or drink containers
- Make sure you store them according to the directions on the label and try to keep them in a well-ventilated area
- If the label says 'keep out of reach of children' or similar, make sure the product is kept in a locked cabinet that's out of children's sight and reach
- If the product is flammable, store it away from heat sources such as heaters or barbecues
- Keep poisonous chemicals away from food, pet food, and medicines

Keep the National Poisons Centre phone number nearby: 0800 POISON (0800 764 766)

Keep connected.  
For more information  
Visit [www.epa.govt.nz/saferhomes](http://www.epa.govt.nz/saferhomes)  
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# Sustainability Trust

## DIY SPRAY AND WIPE

What you'll need for castile-based spray and wipe

- A spray bottle
- 2 cups distilled water
- 2 TB to 1/4 cup of castile soap
- 15 drops lavender essential oil or peppermint or orange

What you'll need for vinegar-based spray and wipe

- 1 cup distilled water
- 1 cup white distilled vinegar
- 1/2 lemon juiced (optional)
- 15 drops lavender essential oil or peppermint, orange, or lemon

How to make it

1. Pour ingredients into a bottle.
2. Shake, shake, shake. And Shake before use.

Things to note:

- The castile-based spray can be used on all surfaces, but must be wiped off immediately (it can get sticky if left to dry).
- The vinegar-based spray cannot be used on marble or granite. If you add lemon, keep it in the fridge.

Solutions for Sustainable Living | [sustaintrust.org.nz](http://sustaintrust.org.nz)



## DIY DISHWASHING LIQUID

What you'll need.

- A container to store it in (your old dish wash bottle will be perfect)
- 2 cups of boiling water
- 3/4 cup of liquid castile soap
- 1/4 cup of grated castile soap
- 1/4 cup of washing soda aka sodium carbonate (not the same as baking soda)
- 20 drops of essential oil. Tea Tree if you want antiseptic properties. Mint, orange or lemon if you're after a sweet smelling clean.

How to make it

1. Bring water to boil. Reduce and add grated soap and washing soda and mix well.
2. Take it off the heat and add liquid soap. Keep stirring.
3. Keep mixing as it cools. Add essential oils.
4. Run it through a sieve as you pour it into the bottle (removes lumps).
5. And you're good to go.

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## DIY DISHWASHING POWDER

What you'll need.

- A sealable container (glass mason jar will do the trick)
- 1 cup of washing soda aka sodium carbonate (not the same as baking soda)
- 1 cup of baking soda
- 1/2 cup of Salt
- 3/4 cup of citric acid.

How to make it

1. Put all ingredients in the jar and shake.
2. Use as normal.

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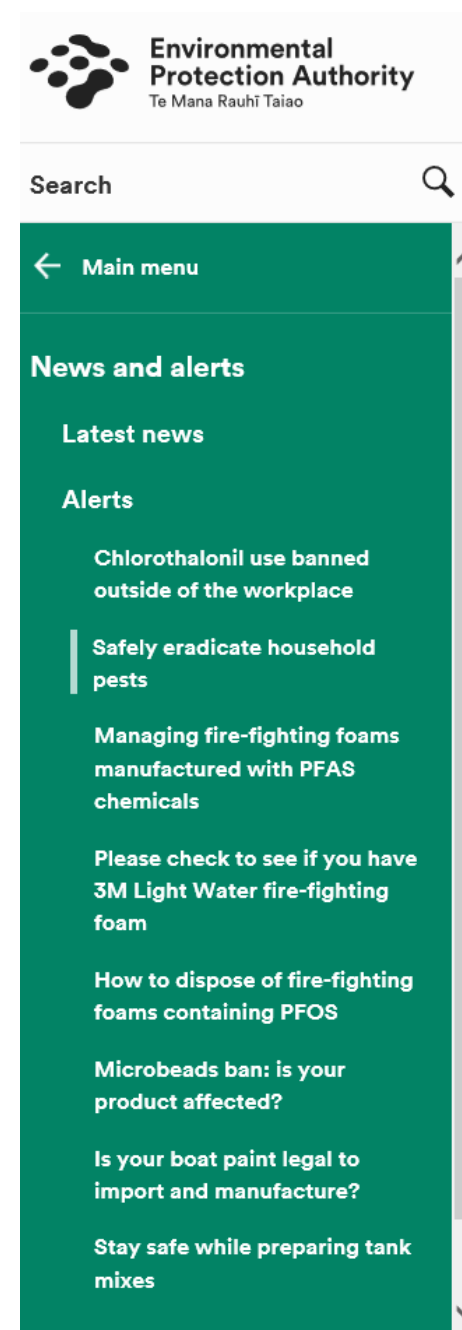


## Red Alerts and Caution Notices

- Red Alert – precautionary tool to warn consumers of very significant dangers
- Caution Notice – alert consumers to less dangerous, but still undesirable dangers attached to some substances
- Not regulatory instruments
- Capture media interest and ‘flag’ risks to the public
- Posted on [epa.govt.nz](http://epa.govt.nz), then link sent out via media release



# Caution Notice example



Home > News and alerts > Alerts >

## Safe use of products to eradicate rats, mice and similar domestic pests

We want to help you stay safe when you use over-the-counter pest control products.

14 November 2017

### Who will rid me of these rats?

That was the cry of the Mayor of Hamelin in 1284, when the German town was infested with vermin. He turned to a mysterious pied piper for help, but it didn't go well. The rats disappeared, but so did all the town's children, when the mayor refused to pay the piper's fee.

Today when we have rat or mouse infestations around the house we generally turn to products sold at the local hardware store or supermarket.

"We want these treatments to go well for everyone except the mice and rats," says Dr Fiona Thomson-Carter our General Manager of Hazardous Substances and New Organisms.

We are responsible for approving hazardous substances such as these, and sets conditions for their safe use.

"We want to emphasise that these products – and there are a wide range of them – are by their nature harmful. They may be sold as pellets, pastes or in blocks. All need to be used with care. They pose health risks to users, children and anyone who comes into contact with them. They can also be harmful to domestic pets, other animals, birds and the environment," says Fiona.

To remind householders about how to stay safe with these products, we have issued this Caution Notice, which sets out recommended safety measures.

#### Caution Notice

This Notice sets out good practice measures for householders using over-the-counter harmful products to eradicate rats, mice and other similar pests around the home. Such products are widely used, and it is important users remain alert to the dangers they can present, and take measures to overcome them.

#### Background

The Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) sets the rules for the use of hazardous substances and new organisms under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act 1996 by assessing the environmental and economic risks and benefits to New Zealanders and the environment. It has approved for sale to consumers a range of products designed to kill mice, rats and similar pests around the home. The EPA sets controls for the safe use of these products. Over the years, many products have been approved to kill rats and mice, and they contain different active ingredients.

For that reason, various controls have been specified over the years, according to the nature of each individual product and best practice at the time. The EPA has issued this Caution Notice to outline best practice approaches today.

These products may come in the form of pastes, pellets, or blocks. They are poisonous, and can be harmful to human, animal, aquatic and bird life. The safety of children, pets, and people who may chance across these substances in an uncontrolled situation, is of particular concern. The products may also harm the environment, especially waterways. Some products contain a bittering agent, aimed at deterring non-target animals and children from ingesting them. This is usually noted on the product label. Such products remain attractive to rats and mice.

Good practice measures for safe use of these products

#### Personal Protection:

Wear non-absorbent gloves when handling the product or dead rodents  
Do not eat, drink or smoke while using the product  
On completion, wash your hands and all areas of exposed skin with soap and water  
Wash gloves thoroughly after each use

#### First Aid:

Contact a doctor immediately and phone the National Poisons Centre on 0800 764 766  
If product gets in your eyes, skin or hair, wash thoroughly with water; remove and wash any contaminated clothing

#### Storage and use:

Store the product in its original container, out of the reach of children and away from foodstuffs, including animal food  
Store securely in a cool, well-ventilated place  
Avoid laying baits in places accessible by children, pets or other non-target animals  
Refrain from laying baits in areas liable to flooding

#### Bait Stations:

Bait stations are recommended as the safest way of using these products  
Each station should have a "floor" so the product does not come in contact with the environment and cannot be scattered by target creatures or other animals  
Bait stations make it less likely that children will come into contact with the baits. They generally are not easily opened by children.

#### Protecting non-target animals

Do not let dogs, cats, or any other non-target animal come into contact with the product  
If such contact does occur, contact a veterinarian immediately  
The product label may provide guidance for veterinarians about antidote procedures

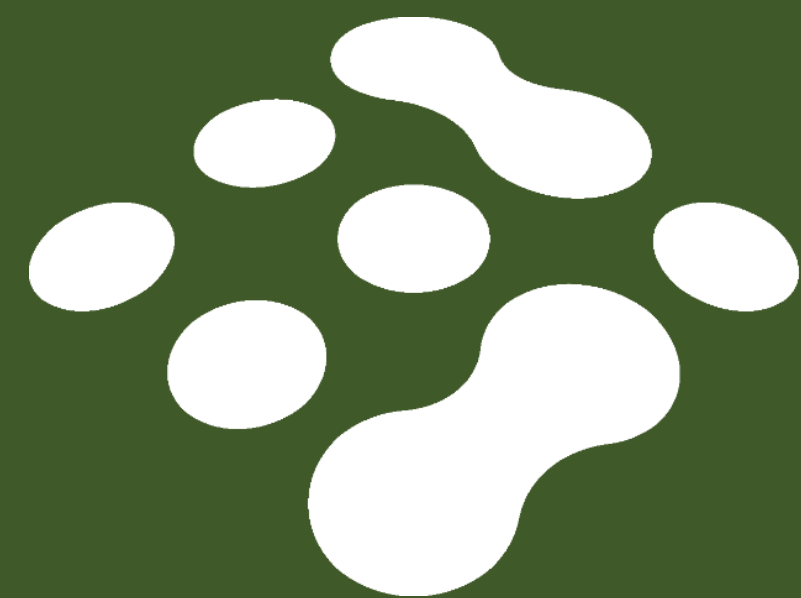
#### Spillage:

Should a spill occur, prevent further spillage  
Wear gloves to collect spilled product, return to the original container and seal tightly  
Wash the affected area with water and detergent, collect the residues and place in a sealed container for disposal at landfill

#### Disposal:

Dispose of animal carcasses by burning or burying  
Carcasses may contain traces of product, so keep them away from children, pets, and other animals  
Retrieve all uneaten baits, wrap, place in plastic bag and dispose at landfill  
Do not retain the product container or use it for any other purpose  
Wrap empty containers and dispose at landfill





# Environmental Protection Authority

Te Mana Rauhi Taiao

For more information contact:

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