

But even if we fixed all our old landfills so they wouldn't leak leachate into aquifers, we still have illegal dumps and trash heaps in our woods and highways. Even if they are smaller, they can pose the same kind of threat to groundwater as the landfills.

Hazardous waste sites

Not all landfills are hazardous, but nearly 100 landfills and dumps and other sites are among the possible HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has listed in Pennsylvania.

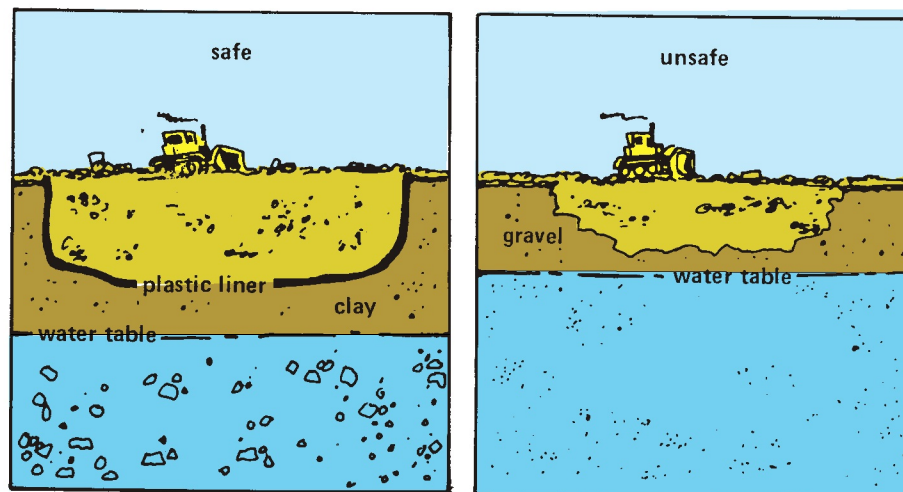
"Hazardous wastes" are chemical substances that are harmful to humans and other animals. Some hazardous wastes include common toxic or poisonous household products. Others might be industrial wastes, buried in drums or leaking out of waste ponds or lagoons where companies had been dumping chemicals for years. State and federal programs are working to clean up such sites.

Leaking storage tanks

A serious problem is gasoline and oil tanks buried underground. Many have been leaking petroleum products into soil and eventually the groundwater.

Gasoline storage tanks at service stations are one kind of buried tank. Heating oil for home furnaces may be buried in tanks outside a house, too. Many of those tanks, old and corroded (eaten away) by acids naturally present in the ground, have leaked petroleum products (such as gasoline and oil) into the soil. However, new laws have been passed to correct past problems with underground storage tanks.

There's another way that petroleum products find their way into our groundwater. Lots of people who change the oil in their cars just carelessly dump the used oil on the ground or down storm drains. . . where it can find its way fairly easily into surface waters and groundwater.



New landfills are designed to prevent leachate from leaving the landfill. Older landfills may have no protective barriers.

