A public service from the **Churchill Area Environmental Council** of Chalfant, Churchill, Forest Hills, & Wilkins

Environmental Advisory 2026

Resource Guide: Air, Water, Recycling

As a community, how do we learn about, understand, and get involved in the environment that surrounds us, provides us opportunities for life and enjoyment, or potentially impacts or harms us? Whether it involves the **air** we breathe, the **water** we drink and use, or the everyday items we strive to **recycle**, the Churchill Area Environmental Council (CAEC) will be looking deeper into environmental topics that affect our local community.

A summary of each upcoming topic is below. The CAEC is an advisory committee of volunteer citizens, and our advisories are prepared for community knowledge, understanding, and opportunities for action in regard to local environmental topics. While the summaries are each brief, they provide a reference to additional information with a future plan for an upcoming, more detailed advisory prepared individually for each topic.

Air Quality

Clean air is a human right. The air in our community needs to be safe to breathe. Despite this, we are regularly exposed to entirely preventable air pollutants which are harmful to human health. How do we improve air quality? By working together to **become aware of what is in our air** and **minimize our exposure to pollutants**.

There are a few different sources you can choose from to learn about what is in our local air. Both **AirNow** and the **Allegheny County Health Department** (ACHD) have Air Quality Index reports that show recent, continuously-updated data on current air quality. **Plume PGH has a daily-updated radar map** that visualizes how much the 3 major offenders of industrial pollution are emitting and how these toxic chemicals travel on wind currents across Allegheny County.

You know that occasional funky smell outside in the morning? That's **hydrogen sulfide**; a **Hazardous Air Pollutant (HAP)** being released into the air by local industrial complexes, as you can see by Plume's map. Whenever it smells odd outside, **you can make a report via SmellPGH** to contribute to the citizen science data collection that powers these maps. You can also **make reports directly to ACHD** (GASP's website offers helpful tips for this). These orgs can then use this data to support their mission of improving air quality across all of southwestern PA by holding local air polluters accountable. We're all in this together!

In a future advisory, we'll share more resources for getting involved with improving air quality, both outdoors and indoors. In the meantime...**download the SmellPGH app to make air quality reports** and **get your home tested for radon!**

Learn about Hydrogen Sulfide
https://www.gasp-pgh.org/resources/hydrogen-sulfide

Report via SmellPGH
https://smellpgh.org/

Radon testing info
https://www.pa.gov/agencies/dep/programs-and-services/radiation-protection/radon-division/radon-in-the-home

Links:
https://www.airnow.gov/?
https://www.alleghenycounty.us/Services/Health-Department/Air-Quality
https://plumepgh.org/?date=2026-10-26
https://www.epa.gov/haps/health-and-environmental-effects-hazardous-air-pollutants
https://www.gasp-pgh.org/report-air-quality

Water Quality

Water is such a simple combination of two elements and yet so vital for life. In its pure natural form, it may contain some minerals. Water in the current environment contains so much more, such as chemical combinations you can't pronounce and **pollutants that do not belong in our water.** Micro plastics have become more prevalent and forever chemicals have become a new challenge. The Clean Water Act passed in the 1980s was put in place to address the state of our water, but has been a slow and increasingly expensive task.

Is it safe to drink the water? What can the public do to help address the issue? **Several organizations and advocacy groups exist to oversee the progress for clean water.**

Three Rivers Waterkeeper
https://www.threeriverswaterkeeper.org/

Allegheny County Conservation District
https://www.accdpa.org/

Clean Water Action
https://cleanwater.org/states/pennsylvania

Recycling - Hard to Recycle Items

Recycling is the process of converting waste materials into new products, preventing valuable resources from ending up in landfills. It is easy to recycle when municipalities have a program through their waste management supplier. The defined items go out to the curb for regularly scheduled pick-ups. Common items are plastic, glass, metal, and cardboard. In addition, there are known organizations where we can donate new or gently used items. Where the difficulty lies is when we have hazardous/bulky items in our home that have no recycling path. These are defined as hard to recycle items. Many are identified as **"Household Hazardous Waste."**

For more information on this service go to: **www.wmatyourdoor.com**

What is Household Hazardous Waste (HHW)? **HHW** is that portion of a household product which is no longer usable, leftover, or not wanted and has to be disposed of. **Key Issue: HHW materials CANNOT be discarded in the regular trash.**

Hazardous Waste Management through the Local Area Municipalities - Garbage collection for each municipality is done through a contract with a waste management group. Contact your municipality's office to determine if there is a hazardous waste pickup service that is available to you. One local service, Waste Management (WM), provides hazardous waste management services through its **"At Your Door Special Collection" service**. Municipalities must have included this option in their waste management contract.

Hazardous Waste Management by **Pennsylvania Resources Council - PRC** is Pennsylvania's oldest grassroots environmental organization established in 1939. This group **schedules pop-ups for collecting both chemicals and electronics** throughout Pennsylvania. These collection events are done in a drive-up and drop-off format. This is available to all residents. Information on what is accepted plus the collection dates and times are available on their website. Two key items: (1) Pre-registration is required. (2) There are associated fees based on the type of item.

Information on PRC, its programs, and event schedules: **www.prc.org**