

More than a billion gallons of paint are sold in the United States each year. Paint is used both on the interior and exterior of homes, to decorate rooms by adding rich texture or warm or cool colors, and to protect homes from damaging weather and climates. But, do you know you need to protect yourself from paint?

As with many materials found in the home, if handled incorrectly, paint can be hazardous. The purpose of this Solutions Bulletin is to help educate consumers on proper purchasing, storage, and disposal of paint.

Information included in this publication is courtesy of the National Paint and Coatings Association (NPCA).

SIX-POINT PROGRAM FOR LEFTOVER PAINT

1. Buy Only the Paint You Need

First, buy only the paint you need. That way, you immediately reduce the chance of having leftover paint. The first step towards protecting the environment is to avoid creating needless waste from the start.

2. Store Paint So It Will Last for Years

Once you have finished painting, put plastic wrap around the opening of the paint can containing the leftover paint. Replace the lid making sure it fastens securely (gently tap with a hammer until sealed), and then store your paint by turning the can upside down. This creates a vacuum seal around the lid, keeping the paint fresh.

Remember, paint is flammable, so be sure you store it in a climate-controlled area away from heat sources. Cans exposed to extreme heat can expand, causing the paint to leak. It is also a good idea to keep water-based paint from freezing. Water-based paint can survive a couple of freeze-thaws, but with each cycle the paint will degrade until it is eventually ruined.

3. Use Up All of Your Paint

Now that you know how to safely store your paint, remember to use it!

Leftover paint can be used on all sorts of small projects, for instance, use it when you are touching up paint jobs. You can also blend it in small quantities with similar colors for larger jobs, or use it as a primer on jobs where the final finish is not critical. As always, remember to read and follow the instructions on the paint can.

4. Recycle the Empty Paint Can

Once you have used all the paint, find out if your community recycles paint cans. The thin skin of paint on the inside of the can must dry completely before recycling.

5. Donate or Exchange Your Paint

Donate spare paint to local schools, community groups, churches, or other charities. Your donation could be tax deductible!

Another way to dispose of paint is to participate or organize a neighborhood paint exchange. Get to know your neighbors and find inspiring new colors to decorate with at the same time.

6. Dispose Of Paint Properly

Water-Based Paint

Liquid paint should not be taken to a landfill or poured down a sink. Use the following method when disposing of water-based paints:

- Fill a paper bag or box with kitty litter, sand, shredded newspaper, or saw dust.
- Pour the remaining paint over the absorbent material.
- Allow paint to dry completely in a well-ventilated area away from children, pets, and direct heat.
- Dispose of the solid in the regular trash.
- For paint residue in the can, remove the lid and allow paint to dry completely. Remove the skin and dispose of it in the regular trash. Leave the label on the can and recycle if a program is available in your area.

Oil-Based Paint & Solvents

Oil-based paint and solvents, including mineral substances, are considered hazardous waste materials. Special precautions and steps must be taken for proper disposal.

Never dispose of liquid oil-based paint or solvents in the regular trash or pour them down the sink. Some communities have special hazardous waste collection programs for liquid paint. Check your local regulations to ensure proper handling.

Lead Paint

Only experts can tell if paint contains lead. Before removing old paint, have the paint checked for lead content. Some local or state health or housing departments can suggest which private labs or public agencies can test your paint for lead or how to obtain a sample for testing. If testing is unavailable or costly, assume that older painted surfaces contain lead.

Lead-based paint should be removed only by professionals trained in hazardous material removal. Do not attempt to remove lead-based paint; an attempt to remove lead-based paint may create a serious hazard in the house. A trained professional must follow very detailed procedures to minimize, control, and contain lead dust generated by the removal process. These procedures are included in the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Interim Guidelines for Removal of Lead-Based Paint. Homeowners should obtain the HUD Interim Guidelines and ensure that contractors use them.

Lead Paint (Con't)

Homeowners should question contractors about their familiarity with the following procedures:

- The room should be sealed from the rest of the house. All furniture, carpets, and drapes should be removed.
- Workers should wear respirators designed to avoid inhaling lead.
- No eating or drinking should be allowed in the work area. All food and eating utensils should be removed from the room. All cabinets as well as food contact surfaces should be covered and sealed.
- Children and other occupants (especially infants, pregnant women, and adults with high blood pressure) should be kept out of the house until the job is completed.
- Clothing worn in the room should be disposed of after working. The work clothing should not be worn in other areas of the house.
- Debris should be cleaned up using special vacuum cleaners with HEPA (high efficiency particle absorption) filters. A wet mop should be used after vacuuming.

For more information about paint purchase, storage, and removal, visit:

- www.paint.org
- www.cpsc.gov/CPSC/PUBS/PUBS/5055.html
- www.generalpaint.com/msds.html

Remember the Six-Point Program

- Buy Only the Paint You Need
- Store Paint So It Will Last for Years
- Use Up All of Your Paint
- Recycle Your Empty Paint Can
- Donate or Exchange Your Leftover Paint
- Dispose of Your Leftover Paint Properly

Remember, paint safety begins with you!



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CHEMICAL EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

SOLUTIONS BULLETIN

The Safe Handling & Disposal of Paint

Presented by the contributors of the Chemical Educational Foundation, furthering a shared goal of promoting chemical safety and protection of the environment.

Six Point Guide to Purchasing and Using Paint and What You Need to Know About Lead Paint Removal

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