

WMRC Factsheet

Household Painting Basics

It may be one of those universal laws—moving in or moving out of a home or apartment requires paint. Whether a fresh coat to help the sale or to cover-up that color you just can't stand—something is needed. This factsheet provides you with a primer on paint. It explains: what paint is; the types of paints available for different purposes; how to determine the amount of paint to purchase; and, how to reduce and properly dispose of paint waste.

Why all the fuss over a little paint?

In Illinois, more than 12 million gallons of paint are used by households every year. The estimated liquid waste from this paint is 1.4 million gallons or about 4,890 tons/year. Of this total waste, about 3,150 tons are landfilled. In addition, at least 14 million paint containers are disposed in landfills each year, taking up about 70,000 cubic yards. What may seem like a little paint to one household multiplies quickly when considering all the households in Illinois!

What is paint?

Most paints are made up of four things: pigment, which provides the color; binder, which is what remains after the paint cures and gives paint the ability to flow and stick to a surface; solvent, which makes paint a liquid and acts as the vehicle which contains the pigment and binder; and, lastly, additives.

The two major types of paint are classified by the solvent used. Latex paints use water as the solvent. Oil-based paints use organic solvents. In this case "organic" is an indication that the solvent is more than likely a petroleum product. These organic

solvents are often considered to be hazardous chemicals because they are toxic and/or flammable. Oil-based paints, as they dry, release chemicals into the air called volatile organic compounds. These compounds, along with the thinners and cleaning agents used with oil-based paints contribute to atmospheric pollution. Latex paints release much smaller amounts of volatile organic compounds and do not require special thinners or cleaning agents.

How to Determine the Amount of Paint Needed

The best way to STOP contributing to the paint waste problem is to decrease the amount of waste produced in the first place. You can do this by purchasing only the amount of paint needed for the job. Determine the amount of paint needed by following these steps:

- 1) Measure the wall height, multiply by the width of the wall to obtain square feet of surface area.
- 2) Subtract the area covered by doors and window openings. This will give you the square feet of the wall to be painted.
- 3) Follow the same procedure for all the walls or other surfaces to be painted and total these numbers.

The resulting number is the area to be covered by your paint. Labels on the paint can tell you the approximate area the paint will cover.

Choosing the Correct Paint

There are many, many kinds of paint to choose from. The proper paint choice for the surface you wish to cover will reduce the potential for waste generation as well as save you money in the long

run. Listed below are some general criteria to follow. Ask your paint dealer for more information on specific concerns or for painting surfaces such as floors, masonry and metal.

Cleaning and Storage Methods

Cleaning methods for latex and oil-based paints are quite different. Latex paints require soap and water. Oil-based paints require paint thinners and other cleaning solvents which are considered to be hazardous materials or wastes due to their flammability. Because of this, leftover oil-based paints and cleaning solvents should never be dumped down the drain, into the city sewer system or onto the ground.

Other disposal problems center on pigments used in older paints because they may contain toxic materials such as heavy metals like cadmium, chromium, and barium. These older paints are

those most often being disposed. However, these pigments are generally used only in industrial and speciality coatings, not household paint.

Lead was banned from use in household paints in 1978, however if you are renovating, scraping, or sanding surfaces painted prior to 1978, you should be aware of potential lead dangers to children. Contact the Illinois Department of Public Health or the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program at 217-782-0403 for further information.

Properly storing paint will extend its useful life. Both latex and solvent-based paints should be stored in containers that are as full as possible, with little dead air space above the paint. This may mean transferring leftovers from a gallon of paint to a glass jar with a lid that can be tightly closed. Latex paint should be stored in an area where it will not freeze.

Interior	
<i>Walls and Ceilings</i> Kitchen and Bathroom Plaster and Wallboard Wood Paneling Wood Trim	<i>Type of Paint</i> sealer or undercoat, latex or oil-base, rubber-base sealer or undercoat, casein, latex or oil-base, interior varnish latex or oil-base, wood sealer, wax undercoat, shellac, stain, interior varnish, latex or oil-base, enamel
<i>Windows</i> Aluminum and Steel Wood Sill	metal primer, aluminum paint, enamel sealer or undercoat, stain, shellac, enamel
Exterior	
<i>Raw Wood</i> Wood, Plywood or Clapboard Rough Wood Siding Exterior Wood Trim	<i>Type of Paint</i> oil or latex primer, oil or latex paint, exterior stain, varnish, shellac, urethane oil or latex, oil or latex shingle paint, exterior stain wood sealer, exterior stain, varnish, oil or latex
<i>Bare Metal</i> Steel or Iron Galvanized metal Aluminum	oil or latex formulated for metal, epoxy oil or latex primer for galvanized metal aluminum paint, oil or latex primers for metal, epoxy, urethane