



Sustainable Practices Paint Management & Disposal



*EH&S Fact Sheet
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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

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The intent of this Fact Sheet is to help all USC departments properly manage and dispose of their surplus paint in a safe and environmentally conscious manner while minimizing unnecessary costs. Following these recommendations will not only protect the environment, but avoid violating environmental regulations.

Overview

Since paints may be flammable or toxic, surplus paints must either be recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste. Most paints fall into one of two categories: water-based or oil-based. Water-based formulas are sometimes referred to as latex, vinyl, or acrylic. Oil-based formulas are sometimes referred to as alkyd, polyurethane, or varnish. Information concerning a paint's formulation can be obtained from the label, Material Safety Data Sheet, or manufacturer.

Air Quality Management District (AQMD) recommends the use of water-based paints (instead of oil-based paints) to reduce air pollution. Although water-based paints are less detrimental to the environment than oil-based paints, they can still affect it and wildlife if disposed of improperly. Oil-based paint is a hazardous waste that can be harmful to human and environmental health due to its toxicity. A study at John Hopkins University found 300 toxic chemicals and 150 carcinogens present in oil-based paint. Additionally, oil-based paint's flammability increases the risk of worker injuries and damaged equipment. Both water-based and oil-based paint disposals must be managed by EH&S.

Recommendations

Here are a few examples of ways to reduce paint waste:

- Before purchasing paint, measure the area to be painted. Talk with suppliers and read product information to determine the right amount of paint to purchase for the job at hand.
- Keep an inventory of your paints to help you decide how much you'll need. Buying the right amount of paint minimizes hazardous waste and also keeps cost down.
- Exchange surplus paint and related materials with other departments.

Disposal

Neither water-based nor oil-based paints may be placed in the campus dumpsters. Paints destined for disposal must be packaged as follows:

- Do not mix different types of paints or solvents without first consulting with EH&S.
- Make sure all containers are tightly sealed so they don't leak.
- If the manufacturer's label is missing or illegible, label the container with a description of its contents.
- Place unwanted paint in a well-ventilated area to await pick-up.
- Request pickups at: <http://capsnet.usc.edu/EHS/HazWastePickUpForm.cfm>

Contact the EH&S office more information.

EH&S Fact Sheets are intended to facilitate team discussions in your department. Post the monthly topic on your departmental bulletin board.