

# Safe Operating Procedure

(12/03)

## PAINT AND PAINT-RELATED MATERIALS

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Most paints fall into one of two categories: water-based or oil-based. Water-based formulations are sometimes referred to as latex, vinyl, or acrylic. Oil-based formulations are sometimes referred to as alkyd, polyurethane, or varnish. Paints may be regulated as a "hazardous waste" when disposed, depending on the formulation. This SOP provides information about how to correctly handle used or excess paints and associated thinners.

Oil-based paints are regulated when disposed due to their flammability and the presence of regulated solvents such as xylene and toluene. Water-based paints are generally not regulated as hazardous waste when disposed since they are nonflammable. However, paints (both water-based and oil-based) that contain certain metallic pigments or fortifiers are regulated as a hazardous waste when disposed. Regulated pigments or fortifiers include: cadmium, chromium, lead, silver, barium, mercury, arsenic, and selenium. Information concerning the presence of regulated constituents and the type of formulation can be obtained from the label, a Material Safety Data Sheet, or the manufacturer.

- **Water-based Paint** - Disposal of water-based paints that do not contain regulated metals can be accomplished by spreading the paint on a piece of plastic or cardboard (no thicker than one inch) and allowing it to air-dry. For drying purposes, the paint should be dried in a well-ventilated area that is protected from rain. When completely dry, it can be disposed in the normal trash. Never place wet paint in the trash, because this is a violation of local ordinances. When washing paint brushes, pans, and related materials that have been used with water-based paint, always use a drain that is connected to the sanitary sewer, which in turn discharges to a Public Owned Treatment Works. Never wash paints to the storm sewer or on-site septic systems.
- **Oil-based Paints** - Where possible, substitute water-based paint for oil-based paint. Excess oil-based paints, since they contain regulated materials, cannot be dried but must be collected by EC Facilities. If paint cans have missing or deteriorated labels, write the contents on the can in some permanent manner. Include manufacturer, product name, product number and chemical constituents.
- **Paint thinners** must be collected and disposed via Facilities after use. Collect used thinners in a metal can with a tight fitting lid and label as "used paint thinners."

- **Brushes and rags** for disposal should be handled in the same manner as the material on the brush (i.e., collect brushes contaminated with oil-based paint and metal-bearing paint for collection by Facilities).
- **Empty paint cans** from both water-based and oil-based paints (except aerosol cans) may be discarded as ordinary garbage. Ensure that all paint has been removed from the can (by wiping, rinsing, etc.) or small amounts of residues (less than 3% of the total original container content) are thoroughly dried prior to disposal.