

## Paint and the Environment

The improper disposal of paints and their wastewater into a storm water drain or sewer can have serious and harmful effects on the environment.

### Latex/Water-Based Paints

- May pollute natural waterways
- May decrease water clarity, which reduces photosynthesis in plants.
- May reduce oxygen levels in the water
- May threaten the survival of fish and other aquatic organisms

### Oil/Solvent-Based Paints

- May deprive aquatic organisms of oxygen
- May cause tumors to form in animals such as fish
- May cause sediment contamination.
- May cause poisoning throughout the food chain which can eventually affect humans

### Disposal Alternatives

- Consider giving the leftover paint to a friend, local church, housing rehabilitation organization or a housing program.
- Consider storing leftover paint for touchups. When properly stored, paint can last for years: cover the opening of the can with plastic wrap; make sure the lid fits securely so the paint doesn't leak; and store the paint can upside down. The paint creates a tight seal around the lid, keeping the paint fresh until it's needed again. To save space, you may transfer the paint to a smaller, plastic, airtight container. Label the container with the color and the room where the paint was used.
- Brighten up a piece of old furniture, a closet door, or even the garage.

## Remember These 5 Simple Steps

1. Buy the correct amount of paint for the project.
2. Store paint to keep it fresh.
3. Use up leftover paint.
4. Reuse or recycle.
5. Dispose of paint properly.

### Did you know?

Excess paint is one of the **most common** household hazardous wastes. Figuring out how much paint you will need before starting a job will save you time, money, and prevent unnecessary waste.

#### Wall Paint Estimator:

- Add together the length of each wall. Multiply the sum by the wall height.
- Subtract 20 for each door and 15 for each window.
- Divide total by 350 to find how many gallons to buy.

#### Ceiling Paint Estimator:

- Multiply the length of the ceiling by its width.
- Divide total by 350 to see how many gallons to buy.

# PROPER PAINT DISPOSAL METHODS



Storm Water Management  
Educational Series

## Proper Disposal of Oil/Solvent-Based Paints & Stains

- Transfer as much paint as possible from the rollers back into the paint containers at the end of the day or job.
- Spin brushes and roller sleeves into a drum for solvent wastes after cleaning them in a minimum amount of solvent;
- Place all solvent into this drum and keep a lid tightly secured to stop harmful substances from evaporating.
- Oil-based paint or paint that has the word "alkyd", flammable, or combustible on the label should be used up until none is left. This can be done by painting old boards or newspapers in a well-ventilated place. Then the painted wood and newspapers can go into regular garbage along with the empty can.
- Take unwanted, used solvent and oil/solvent-based paints and stains to the City/County Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day event. Contact Keep Mobile Beautiful (251-208-6029) for information.



## Proper Disposal of Latex/Water-Based Paints

- Place paint from the rollers, trays, and brushes back into containers at the end of the day or job.
- Transfer water used to clean one roller tray into the next tray to be cleaned, and so on.
- Spin brushes and roller sleeves into a waste paint drum before you wash them in a sink connected to sanitary sewer; Let the waste paint dry and dispose of it as solid waste.
- Collect and place all wastewater from equipment cleaning into larger drums and allow the solids to settle. For faster drying, add Redi-Mix Concrete or a package of Waste Paint Hardener. Dispose of solid waste by sealing it and placing it for disposal in a garbage bin.

## Improper Disposal of Any Paint

- **Never** dispose of paint or brush/tool cleaning wastewater into a storm water drain, inlet, or drainage network.
- **Never** dispose of paint or brush/tool cleaning wastewater in any place from which the wastes may enter or pollute a natural water body (i.e. a creek, stream, ditch, channel, pond, lagoon, lake, river or ocean).

## Proper Reuse and Disposal of Paint Thinners & Solvents

- Put used brush cleaners in closed container and allow paint particles to settle.
- Pour off clear liquid into clean, empty container for reuse. Store in a safe place.
- Add an absorbent material to the remaining residue (such as cat litter, shredded paper, or sawdust).
- Let residue dry completely before disposing of it in your regular garbage.

## Recycling Paint and Aerosol Containers

Paint and aerosol containers can be recycled at a local scrap-metal center or the Metro Recycling Drop-off Center.

- Paint containers must be empty and dry in order to recycle. A thin layer of dried paint on the sides and bottom of the can is usually acceptable. Lids may be recycled, as well, but must be taken off the can.
- **Empty** aerosol cans may be recycled. Do not puncture, crush, or incinerate the can. You do not have to remove the nozzle of the spray cans, but do remove the aerosol caps, which are generally made of plastic.