

## How to Prevent Paint Pollution

The warm weather of summertime provides homeowners with an opportunity to look around the outside of their homes and survey any maintenance needs that may have arisen because of harsh winter weather, or just due to years of aging. For many homeowners, this will mean cracking open new paint cans and applying a fresh coat of paint to their house. According to the *Painting Pro Times*, the U.S market for paint is more than \$18 billion. Touching up the house, painting the deck or picket fence, maybe even putting some new color indoors after all that spring cleaning are just a few reasons to breakout the brushes and tarps.

However, many of us overestimate the amount of paint that we will need to complete the job, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency estimates that once fall comes, as much as 10 percent of the left over paint ends up in our nation's landfills and incinerators. You can help reduce the amount of paint in our landfills by following these seven pollution preventing tips for paint.

### **1. Buy only the paint you need**

Reduce the chance of having leftovers in the first place by buying only what you need. By doing this you will avoid creating excess waste, practicing "source reduction" the smart way to help the environment. If it is for a small space, think of smaller portions; a gallon of paint can go further than you may think.

### **2. Store paint so it lasts**

When paint is stored properly it can last for years. Use plastic wrap to cover the opening and replace the lid; make sure it is a secure fit so the paint doesn't leak. Try storing the paint can upside down. The paint creates a tight seal around the lid, keeping it fresh until the next time you need it. Be sure to store it in a warm enough place so it does not freeze over the duration of the winter.

### **3. Use up all your paint**

Now that you are aware you can store your paint for years, don't forget about it! Use it up. Left over paint can be used on touch-ups and smaller projects. Think about possibly mixing smaller quantities with similar colors of latex paints to use on larger jobs or as primer where final finish isn't critical.

### **4. Recycle the empty paint can**

When all the paint has been used up, check to see if your community recycles empty steel paint cans. If so, the paint inside of the can must be dry before it is recycled. The community recycling center may also accept plastic paint pails and containers. By recycling your paint cans, you eliminate another item from our waste stream.

### **5. Donate or exchange your paint**

If you are unable to use your leftover paint, donate it to community groups, theater groups, schools, churches, and others who can use it. You may even be able to take a tax deduction. Another great way to get rid of any unwanted paint is by organizing a neighbor- to-neighbor or community-wide paint exchange.

### **6. Recycle Your Paint**

Recycling your paint is another option, giving it another chance to be reused. Some communities collect paint for recycling. Think about buying recycled paint - it will create a larger demand for it. The next time you need paint, ask your paint dealer about it.

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### 7. Dispose of your paint properly

Saving, using up, donating, exchanging or recycling leftover paint should be relatively easy for most people. However, if you do dispose of the paint as a last resort, do so properly:

- Air dry leftover latex-based paint and discard it in your trash. Make sure you do this away from children and pets. One method is to pour the latex paint onto a sheet of plastic and let it dry. Then you can roll it up and toss it out with your regular trash.
- Liquid solvent-based paint should not be discarded with the normal trash. Instead, save it for a special paint collection program or a household hazardous waste program in your community. Contact the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services or your Town office for details on the next event nearest you.
- Air drying liquid solvent-based paint is generally not recommended, but if the paint has already solidified in a closed can, you can dispose of it in your regular trash.

### Additional Information

For more information regarding household hazardous waste, please contact [hhw@des.nh.gov](mailto:hhw@des.nh.gov), call (603) 271-2047, or go to <http://des.nh.gov/>.