

## How to manage paint related waste

If possible, recycle or dispose of your paint-related waste at your local HHW collection site. Otherwise, please follow these tips:



### Latex paint disposal

Latex paint is not hazardous and can be disposed with regular waste.

- Pour the paint into an absorbent material such as shredded newspaper, saw dust, or kitty litter.
- With the lid off, place it outside, away from pets and children, and allow it to completely dry.
- Dispose of the dried paint in trash.
- In areas where recycling programs exist, recycle the empty, dry container.

### Oil-based paint disposal

Oil-based paint, stains and varnishes are hazardous and should not be disposed, if possible.

- Take it to a household hazardous waste collection program if available. Or,
  - If no HHW collection events are scheduled, you may mix with an absorbent like sawdust, clay-based kitty litter or rags. Small quantities may be mixed in the can; larger quantities can be mixed in a box lined with a plastic bag. Stir with a stick until all the paint is absorbed. Seal the solidified paint and can, absorbent stick, box, etc., in a plastic bag and dispose it with trash.
- NOTE: Mix outside, away from children and pets. Use gloves. Avoid if you have chronic respiratory problems.
- In areas where recycling programs exist, recycle the empty, dry container.

### Paint Thinner, Turpentine and Mineral Spirits

Paint thinners, turpentine and mineral spirits can be reused! Let the solid particles settle to the bottom of a closed container, then pour off the clear liquid. Store it in a clean container for use with another project.

For additional information on recycling and Household Hazardous Waste collection programs or events specific to your location, contact your local municipality and/or call DEP's toll-free **Recycling Hotline** at **1-800-346-4242**.

# What do I do with leftover PAINT?



**pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
PROTECTION



Paints, Stains and Varnishes can add color to your home, perk up a drab room or transform a piece of furniture. But did you know that paint and paint-related products may be **harmful to the environment** when they are disposed? Paints and related products **contribute to air pollution**. And, if they are poured down the drain or put in a landfill, paint products can **pollute our groundwater**. Never throw liquid paint products into your trash. In addition, paint products can **irritate your eyes and skin** and may be **harmful if inhaled**.

## Types of Paint Products

**Latex Paints** are water-based and usually less harmful to the environment than oil-based paints. They clean up with soap and water.

**Oil-based Paints, Stains and Varnishes** contain solvents that don't mix with water. They must be cleaned with paint thinner or appropriate solvents. Oil-based paint products are flammable and present particular waste management problems. Never dump these products into storm sewers, drains or onto the ground.

**Paint Thinner, Turpentine and Mineral Spirits** are generally used to thin oil-based-paints and stains or to clean up the residues left behind. Leftovers are household hazardous waste (HHW): they are highly flammable and should never be dumped into the environment.

## Tips to reduce paint related waste

### Buy wisely

Save money and reduce waste by knowing how much to buy. Don't buy more than you need.

- Measure the area you are painting to determine the amount of paint you need. A typical gallon of paint covers about 400 square feet, although coverage varies by brand and surface to be painted.
- Purchase the right type of paint. Check the label to make sure the product is suited for your project (i.e. interior/exterior, plaster, wood, metal, or high temperature).
- Use latex paint if possible. It is less harmful to the environment than oil-based paint. The words "alkyd" or "oil-based" indicate that the paint is oil-based. "Soap and water" clean-up instructions indicate latex paint.
- Purchase recycled paint if it is available in your area.
- Use it all. If you are on the end of a job and realize you need only a small amount to finish, try to exchange the unopened can for a quart. Old latex paints can be blended to produce beige or gray. Oil-based paints may also be mixed. **DO NOT MIX OIL-BASED PAINT WITH LATEX PAINT.** Use leftovers for second coats, touch-ups, painting fences, bird houses, basements, sheds, etc.



### Donate it

If you have extra paint, give it to a friend, neighbor, or small business owner, etc., or donate leftovers to community or religious groups, recreation departments, sign painters, farmers for fences, etc.

### Keep it

If you cannot use it all immediately, keep it for future use. Store small amounts in a tightly sealed glass jar. Keep larger amounts in the original can. Close the lid tightly and store the can upside-down. The paint will stay fresh by creating a seal around the rim.

