

## Paint Disposal: Fact Sheet for University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service Agents\*

**Oil-Based Paints:** paint is oil-based if paint thinner or mineral spirits are required for clean up  
**Latex- or Water-Based Paints:** paint is latex- or water-based if water is sufficient for clean up

### Lead and Mercury...

- Lead was banned from paint in 1973, and mercury was banned in 1991.
- For info. on testing paint for lead visit the KY Public Safety Branch website at <http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/lead.htm>. This site contains information on certified lead abatement companies and certified lead-inspection/assessment companies. Simply go to the website listed, scroll down the page and click on the Certified Employees and Companies link to access a current listing of individuals and businesses.
- To determine if leftover paint (purchased prior to 1991) contains mercury call the paint's manufacturer.
- To dispose of leftover paint that contains lead or mercury contact your local solid waste coordinator or the Kentucky Division of Waste Management at (502) 564-6716.

### What To Do With Leftover Paint...

- Use it up by applying a second coat or touch up.
- Use on another project. Properly stored paint will stay in good condition for up to 10 years.
- Mix leftover latex paints together. The color will turn out beige, gray, or muddy. Use it in a house, garage, basement, or as an undercoat.
- "Share the wealth" of unused paints...have a community drop and

swap paint day or donate left-over paint to a community group, church or school.

### Rule of Thumb For Leftover Paint...

- Do not mix exterior paints with interior paints and remember oil and water do not mix, do not blend oil-based paint with latex- or water-based paint.
- For leftover paint to be considered useable for other individuals or groups, 1/3 gallon of paint should remain in the original container with legible label.

**Did you know...** approximately 90% of household hazardous waste collected is paint!



### Oil-Based Paints ...

- Oil-based paint and paint products (such as thinners, solvents, stains and finishes) are classified as hazardous by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
- Oil-based paint is a big disposal problem because the volatile hydrocarbons it contains could ignite. Never let it sit open to evaporate - the fumes are toxic and pollute the environment. In addition, many oil-based paints are pigmented with heavy metals like cadmium.
- If at all possible use up all oil-based paints.
- If you are not able to use all the leftover paint, your next best choice is to take it to a hazardous-waste facility for disposal. Many communities have hazardous waste collection days if a hazardous waste facility is not available. For information on hazardous waste facilities or collection days in your community contact your local chamber of commerce, county solid waste coordinator, or the Kentucky Division of Waste Management at (502) 564-6716.
- Garbage collectors in some communities will accept oil-based paint that has been dried using an absorbent material, such as kitty litter. Check with your local chamber of commerce, solid waste coordinator, or the Kentucky Division of

Waste Management for guidelines in your county regarding preferred oil-based paint disposal methods.

### Latex- or Water-Based Paints...

- If your leftover paint is latex-based and dries out before you can use it, you may dispose of it with your other trash.
- If the latex paint isn't entirely dry or is moldy, it can be left open outside to evaporate. Stirring periodically speeds up drying, but depending on the amount of paint, the evaporation process could take up to a year. To speed up the paint drying process, add an absorbent material, such as kitty litter, to the paint. Remember, to dry paint outdoors, away from children and animals! Once the paint is dry, place the paint can in a plastic lined box with the paint lid removed (so garbage collectors can see that the paint can is empty or completely dried) and dispose with your other household trash.

**Remember** - always wash brushes in a sink that directs its waste-water to a waste-water treatment facility. Never dispose of any kind of paint or paint product by pouring it on the ground or into a sewer or septic tank. This may result in the hazardous materials in the paint leaking into our water supply.

**Don't know your solid waste coordinator...**contact the KY Division of Waste Management at (502) 564-6716 or visit the following website for county info:  
<http://www.waste.ky.gov/programs/rcla/County+Solid+Waste+Coordinators.htm>

\*This publication was adapted from *About Paint*, by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management, Indiana Recycling Coalition and ENRI-316 *Disposal of Leftover Paint*, University of Kentucky Environmental and Natural Resource Issues Task Force. For additional information and references see ENRI-316 *Disposal of Leftover Paint*.

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