

DISPOSING OF LEFTOVER LATEX PAINT

There are two types of paints commonly sold for home use-water-based latex paints and oil-based paints.

Oil based paints, (as well as wood finishes, shellacs, varnishes, wood protectors, mildew resistant paints, and "preservative" paints) must all be brought to a household chemicals drop-off day if you want to get rid of them. In Chippewa County you can call 632-0525 for information on up-coming drop-off days.

Latex paint over 20 years old may contain lead and must also be brought in on a household chemicals drop-off day.

The rest of this flyer is about latex paints under 20 years old. Modern latex paint is easier to get rid of than any other kind of paint or finish.

Deciding if it is latex paint

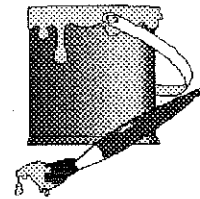
first try looking for "latex" on the label. If the label is missing or covered with paint, you may be able to tell what kind of paint you have based on how it was thinned and cleaned up: if water will rinse fresh paint off hands and brushes the paint is a latex. if paint thinner, mineral spirits, or a special brush cleaner must be used to clean up, then the paint is oil-based. So, if you remember using the paint and that you didn't have to use paint thinner, turpentine, mineral spirits, or other solvents other than water to clean up, then it is latex paint.

If you can't figure out whether it is latex paint, assume it is oil-based and call 632-0525 for information about bringing the paint to a household chemicals drop off day.

The best places to start

It may be too late this time, but the best way to handle extra paint is not to buy it. Most paints list how many square feet they will cover on the label. Measure the area you plan to paint (multiply the length of the wall in feet by its height to get square feet) and ask the clerk in the paint department for help in buying only the amount you need. This way you avoid waste and save your money and time.

Next, use up the paint you buy. If there is just a bit left, apply another coat somewhere to use it up. Or, use it for touch ups later.



If you plan to use paint for future touch ups, be sure to store it in a heated building because freezing ruins latex paint. If the paint is watery or the clear and colored portions keep separating when you try to mix them, then your paint is not usable.

Disposing of latex paint

Latex paint is less toxic than oil-based paint, but it still has poisonous chemicals in it. Since latex paint is often over half water, it can easily soak into soil or spread through water in the environment. If it isn't dried out before it is thrown out, it can seep into our lakes and wells.

Also, while it's okay to rinse brushes and rollers and clean-up your hands at a sink after painting with latex, do not pour paint into drains connected to septic tanks or municipal sewage systems, nor into storm drains.

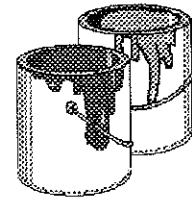
How much is in the can?

How you'll want to handle your old paint depends in part on how much is in each can. If the can has just a thin film (less than 1/32 of an inch) on the sides, you can simply throw out the can. If it is a metal can you can even recycle it.

If there is just an inch or so on the paint can, simply pop the lid open a crack and leave the open can in a well ventilated area where children and animals won't go to get it. Within a few weeks, the paint will dry out and harden.

Then you can put the whole can out with your regular garbage.

When you put latex paint out with your trash, put the can where the garbage hauler can see it and leave the lid off so that they can see that the paint has hardened. Haulers cannot pick up paint unless they know it is thoroughly dried latex paint.



Liquid paint is not picked up because it would run out of the can when the garbage is compacted and/or may leach out of a landfill and pollute neighboring wells.

If there is more than a little paint in the can

A pint or more of paint can take a long time to dry. Here are a couple of suggestions to speed it up:

- ▶ Line a box with a plastic bag and pour a thin layer of paint (less than 1 inch thick) into the box. Store the box in a well ventilated place, where children and animals won't get into it. When the first layer has hardened, pour in another layer. When you have dried out all of the paint, put the box out with your regular trash.
- ▶ Either in the can (if there is room) or in a plastic lined box, mix the paint with an equal amount of cat box filler or oil dry. You will still need to store it until it is fully hardened.

Basically.....

- ▶ Do not pour paint down any kind of drain (to storm drains, sewer system, or septic system) or put liquid paint in the regular trash
- ▶ Dry, hardened, modern latex paints that do not contain preservatives can be disposed of with your regular trash.
- ▶ When drying out latex paints, store them in a well ventilated building where children and animals can't get into them.
- ▶ When you put latex paint out with your trash, put the can where the garbage hauler can see it and leave the lid off so they can see that the paint has hardened.. Haulers can not pick up paint unless they know it is thoroughly dried.
- ▶ If a latex paint can is over twenty years old or the label says it is mildew resistant or preservative, you must bring it to a household chemicals drop-off day.
- ▶ You must bring all non-latex paints, stains, shellacs, varnishes, and other wood and metal finishes to a household chemicals drop-off day if you want to get rid of them.
- ▶ The Chippewa County Household Chemicals disposal line number is 632-0525.