

Managing Surplus Paint and Painting Supplies

The Office of Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) has created this Fact Sheet to help UC Berkeley departments manage their surplus paint and spent solvents in a safe and environmentally sound manner. Since they may be flammable or toxic (many paints contain metals such as chromium, cadmium, lead, or mercury), surplus paints and solvents must either be recycled or disposed of as hazardous waste. Following these guidelines can help you save money, protect the environment, and comply with local, state and federal regulations.

Protecting the environment

Never mix paints with absorbent materials such as kitty litter in order to throw excess paint in the trash. This is illegal.

Never “air dry” unused paint for the purpose of disposal. Doing so violates hazardous waste and air quality regulations.

Avoid purchasing or using oil-based paints. Use water-based products which release fewer toxic contaminants into the air and pose a minimal fire risk.

Exchange surplus paint

The most cost-effective way to manage your usable, surplus paint products is to donate them to other departments for reuse. The Art Practice Department (642-4190) and Physical Plant-Campus Services (642-1680) may be able to use your surplus paint for art projects or graffiti abatement. Call the department directly to make arrangements and confirm that they can use it. (Paint used in residential areas must be free of lead and mercury. Check the container label or the Material Safety Data Sheet.)

EH&S also maintains a web-accessible Chemical Exchange (CHEX) program, which is another campus resource to assist with the exchange of usable paints. See the EH&S Fact Sheet “Chemical Exchange” (CHEX) or visit the EH&S web at <http://ehs.berkeley.edu/hm/46-chex.html>. If your department can use surplus paint, contact EH&S.

How to dispose of unwanted paint and solvents

If oil or latex paints cannot be donated, they must be managed by EH&S. Disposing of paint in a dumpster is illegal, and the University or the individual perpetrator is liable for hefty fines of up to \$25,000 per violation.

Paints disposed of through EH&S must be packaged as follows:

- Do not mix different types of paints or solvents without first consulting with EH&S.
- Make sure all containers are sealed and do not leak.



Dispose of non-hazardous debris in common trash

- If the manufacturer's label is missing or illegible, label the container with a description of its contents.
- Place unwanted paint in a well-ventilated area to await pickup. To store flammable paints and solvents, follow the guidelines outlined in the EH&S Fact Sheet Storage of Flammable Liquids.
- Label each box of paint or bucket with a hazardous label. Go to <http://ehs.berkeley.edu/hwp> for training and labeling information.

Empty paint, solvent and aerosol containers may be disposed of in the trash if they are completely empty and are smaller than 5 gallons in size. For more information on how to determine whether or not a container is empty, please refer to the EH&S Fact Sheet *Empty Container Disposal and Recycling Options*.

Completely dried painting supplies, including tarps, rollers, and brushes may also be thrown away as long as all the paint is removed first. Reuse the excess paint or dispose of it through EH&S. Small amounts of latex paint rinse water may be drain-disposed (see below).

Intact, painted building materials, including wood, pvc piping and other non-hazardous building materials with no flaking paint may be disposed of in the common trash. Flaking paint must be scraped off and disposed of through EH&S.

Dispose of latex paint rinse water in the sink, unless it contains restricted materials

Latex paint rinse water from brushes, rollers, buckets, or pans can be drain disposed to the sanitary sewer as long as the free flowing product has been collected and the paint did not contain the following restricted metals:

Antimony	Arsenic	Beryllium	Cadmium	Chromium
Copper	Lead	Mercury	Nickel	Selenium
Silver	Thallium	Zinc		

For additional assistance with drain disposal questions, call EH&S or go to ehs.berkeley.edu/pubs/guidelines/draindispgls.html. Never pour paint or rinses from paint into a storm drain. Doing so is a violation of federal, state, and local law. Storm drains empty directly into San Francisco Bay.

Tips on minimizing paint disposal costs

Minimize waste and keep costs down by only buying the amount of paint you need for the job at hand. Keeping an accurate inventory of your paints will help you decide how much you'll need. Exchange surplus paint and related materials with other departments.

Paint is a hazardous material that may harm the environment if it is not managed properly. Following these steps will help you protect the environment and avoid violating environmental regulations.

For questions about the disposal of unwanted hazardous waste, call EH&S.

