



January 2003

## **How do I dispose of paint and related materials?**

Paint is a very commonly used chemical both residentially and in the workplace. Since paint is so commonplace, it is often mishandled. Some paints are hazardous and need to be handled according to state and federal regulations. Below is a description of a few of the types of paint and the proper disposal and handling of them. Paint, like most other chemicals, is very useful and safe when it is handled with respect and care.

### **Types**

There are two basic types of paint available today, latex and oil-based. Latex paints are water based and are considered non-hazardous. Oil-based paints, sometimes designated with the word alkyd, are flammable and thus considered hazardous. Older paints and some specialty paints, like aircraft or marine paints, still contain heavy metals or PCB's that can be harmful to people, as well as being flammable. The ingredients should be listed on the side of the container. Please make sure that the type of paint being used is the one that is best suited to the project. And if at all possible, use latex paint, as it is the most environmentally friendly and least toxic paint.

### **Managing Supplies**

The best way to help with paint disposal is to manage supplies. Buy only what is needed and if at all possible only buy latex paint. Latex paint is much easier to cleanup (just rinse with soap and water) and disposal is less expensive. Oil-based paint needs other hazardous materials (paint thinner, mineral spirits or turpentine) for cleanup and thus generates more waste for disposal. These cleaners also cost more money, which adds to project costs. Oil-based paints and its cleaners are fire hazards since they are flammable. Also rags used to clean up oil-based paints can easily catch fire, or even spontaneously combust, if stored improperly. If old paint, that can no longer be used or will never be used, is present please contact EH&S for disposal.

### **Recycling**

Unopened containers of paint can be sent to Surplus and Salvage, 865-4371, for resale. Any chemicals, including oil-based paint may also be available through the EH&S chemical redistribution program. Please contact EH&S, 865-6391, for availability of these products or to be contacted when a product becomes available.

### **Disposal**

The disposal of all paint, that can not be reused, should be through EH&S. To do this, please fill out the chemical waste pickup request form, available on the EH&S website, [www.ehs.psu.edu](http://www.ehs.psu.edu), under Waste Disposal. Any cleaning supplies, rags, brushes, etc. used with oil-based paint should be disposed of through EH&S. Supplies associated with latex paint can all be disposed in the regular trash after being cleaned with soap and water. The rinseate can then be disposed in the sink.