



UCCS SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURE

42. SAFE STORAGE AND HANDLING OF PAINT AND PAINT-RELATED MATERIALS

(For assistance, please contact [Environmental Health & Safety](#))

Paints may be regulated hazardous waste for disposal, depending on constituents and formulation. This SOP provides information about how to correctly handle used or excess paints, materials and associated thinners. **See the *Aerosol SOP* for spray paint in aerosol cans.**

Most paints fall into one of several categories:

- **SPECIAL PAINTS containing certain metallic pigments, fortifiers or poisons** (both water-based and oil-based) **are regulated hazardous waste** for disposal.
 - Regulated materials: cadmium, chromium, lead, silver, barium, mercury, arsenic, selenium and any pesticide, herbicide or germicide.
 - Information concerning the presence of regulated constituents can be obtained from the label, Safety Data Sheet (SDS), or manufacturer.
 - Contact [EH&S](#) PRIOR to ordering whenever possible
 - DO NOT THROW THESE PAINTS OR RESIDUE IN REGULAR TRASH – refer to proper disposal procedure. See **HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN on the EHS website.**
- **WATER-BASED** (latex, vinyl, acrylic, etc.) **Water-based paints are generally not regulated hazardous waste** (see above) when disposed since they are nonflammable. Dried paint and residue may be disposed in the trash (see below). Otherwise refer to proper disposal procedure.
- **OIL-BASED** (alkyd, polyurethane, varnish, etc.) **Oil-based paints and residue are regulated hazardous waste** for disposal due to their flammability and the presence of regulated solvents such as Xylene and Toluene. Most thinners and removers fall in this category as well. DO NOT THROW THESE PAINTS OR RESIDUE IN THE REGULAR TRASH – refer to proper disposal procedure. See **HAZARDOUS WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN on the EHS website.**

Contact [EH&S](#) with any questions

Disposal

EMPTY PAINT, SOLVENT OR REMOVER CANS (except aerosol cans)

- **When dry may be discarded as ordinary trash.**
- Ensure that as much paint or material has been removed from the can (wiping, rinsing, etc.) as possible.
 - A small amount of residue (less than 3% of the total original container content) is acceptable if thoroughly dried prior to disposal
 - Handle waste rinse and rags as indicated below.
 - **Do not dispose regulated or oil-based paint residue in sanitary sewer or trash.**

SPECIAL PAINT – any paint with regulated metal or poison

- **Requires special handling and disposal**
- CONTACT [EH&S](#) PRIOR TO ORDERING WHENEVER POSSIBLE
- Collect all residue (cans, containers, brushes, mixing sticks, drop cloths, rags, etc.)
 - Place residue in sealed plastic bag
 - Label bag “REGULATED PAINT RESIDUE” and **ATTACH COPY OF APPLICABLE SDS TO BAG**
 - CONTACT [EH&S](#) FOR PROPER DISPOSAL



WATER-BASED PAINT – which does not contain regulated metals or poison

- **Never place liquid or wet paint in the trash**
- Contact [PaintCare Colorado](#) to recycle excess USEABLE paint
- Spread contaminated or unusable paint on a piece of scrap wood, plastic or cardboard
- Air-dry in a well-ventilated area that is protected from weather (rain & snow)
- When completely dry, dispose in the normal trash
- **When washing paintbrushes, pans, and related materials used with water-based paint**
 - Always use a drain that is connected to the sanitary sewer
 - Always flush the drain thoroughly after rinse water runs clear
 - Always clean up the surrounding area
- **Never wash or flush water-based paints to the storm sewer**

OIL-BASED PAINTS

- **Where possible, substitute water-based paint for oil-based paint.**
- Contact [PaintCare Colorado](#) to recycle excess useable paint
- **Air-drying oil-based paints is not an acceptable disposal method.**
- If paint cans have missing, illegible or deteriorated labels
 - Write the contents on the can in some permanent manner
 - Include manufacturer, product name, product number and chemical constituents
 - **ATTACH APPLICABLE SDS TO THE CONTAINER**
- **Excess, old, or unusable oil-based paints containing regulated materials**
 - Place residue and other materials in sealed plastic bag
 - Label bag “regulated paint residue” and **ATTACH COPY OF SDS TO THE BAG**
 - Contact [EH&S](#) for proper disposal

PAINT THINNERS, SOLVENTS, AND REMOVERS

- Collect used material in a metal can with a tight fitting lid and label as "used paint thinner"
- Contact [EH&S](#) for proper disposal

BRUSHES AND RAGS

- Handle in same manner as material for which they were used (see above)
- Place contaminated rags and brushes in a tightly closed container when not in use. Mark container with information for material on which rags and brushes were used (**ATTACH THE APPLICABLE SDS**). See **Absorbents & Shop Towels SOP (01)**.
- Collect brushes contaminated with regulated or oil-based paint
 - Place in sealed plastic bag
 - Label “contaminated material”
 - **ATTACH APPLICABLE SDS TO THE BAG**
 - Contact [EH&S](#) for proper disposal

Last reviewed by Cynthia Norton on September 22, 2021