

Latex Paint Disposal

Environmental Management Bulletin

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While most organizations generate paint waste at some point, it is important to make an informed choice when purchasing paint to avoid generating unnecessary hazardous waste. The most common paint used is Latex paint. Today's latex paints are suitable for many applications that were traditionally reserved for oil-based paints. If possible, try to avoid oil-based paints as they contain solvents and usually must be disposed of as a hazardous waste.

Fort Leonard Wood (FLW) Guidelines

This document will provide guidance on making a latex paint determination, preparing latex paint for disposal, and properly disposing of latex paint. Specific questions about latex paint can be directed to the Directorate of Public Works (DPW) Environmental Branch at 573 - 596 - 0882.

1. **LATEX DETERMINATION:** When determining if the paint is latex, first look for the word LATEX on the original paint can label. If the label does not specifically state that the paint is latex, contact the Defense Logistics Agency Disposition Service Hazardous Waste Contractor, at 573-596-5951, who will determine the appropriate method of handling and disposal.
2. **AVOIDING DISPOSAL:** In the event an organization has leftover latex paint, several options are available other than disposal. Unopened paint can be returned to the store where it was purchased or the excess can be donated to another unit or organization. The unused paint can also be used as a primer coat for other painting projects. To save the unused paint for longer periods of time:
 - Take care not to damage the lid while opening.
 - Cover the opening with plastic wrap.
 - Place lid on securely so paint does not leak. Use a mallet to tap lid on securely. A secure lid creates an airtight barrier preserving the paint.

Buy only what is needed. Ask the sales staff for assistance in determining how much paint will be needed for the project. Properly estimate the quantity needed by using an online paint calculator at <http://www.lhwmp.org/home/HHW/paint-calc.aspx>. Paint projects require about one gallon of paint to cover approximately 400 square feet of smooth surface. This will save money and avoid waste by buying the right amount of paint.

3. **DISPOSAL:**
 - a. Certain preparations must be made before disposing latex paint on FLW. Paint must NEVER be poured down the drain, down the sewer, on the ground, in a stream, etc. All latex paints must be solidified before disposal. There can



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be no free-flowing liquids. To solidify the latex paint, mix 1 lb. of clay-based cat litter per ½ gallon of paint. Stir the mixture completely and let the paint dry. It will take approximately 10 minutes for the cat litter to absorb the paint and harden. The process will need to be repeated as necessary in order to ensure the paint is completely dry. If there is too much paint in the can, stir in enough cat litter to dry out the paint, then pour-off paint into any plastic bag or cardboard container that is large enough to hold the paint and the cat litter. Stir and let dry. Repeat until paint is dry. Small quantities of remaining paint may be air-dried by leaving the lid off overnight, allowing the paint to dry. If paint has not dried completely (overnight), add cat litter until dry.

- b. Once the latex paint has solidified, the dried paint and paint can are to be disposed of in the regular trash dumpster. **Do not** put the lid back on the can before disposal. The trash hauler needs to make sure that the paint has solidified before removal. (State and Federal Regulations make it illegal to place any free-flowing liquid into the trash dumpster or landfill.) Containers of free-flowing liquids *placed beside* a trash dumpster are also a violation of State and Federal Law.

Contact the Hazardous Waste Program Manager at DPW Environmental Division at 573-596-0882 for additional information or questions.