

Responsible Latex Paint Disposal

“Your World” article submission for August 27, 2007

The Washtenaw County Home Toxics Reduction Program, HTRP, continues to be a successful outlet for responsible household chemical disposal. Collections take place on Saturdays in April – December, excluding holiday weekends, from 9am – 12noon. It is located at 705 N. Zeeb Road. Upon arrival, follow the signs leading to the HTRP shed behind the building. It is most highly trafficked between 11am – 12noon, so reduce your chances of having to wait in line and arrive before 11am!

While Washtenaw County readily encourages people to bring oil-based paints to the collection it is not necessary to bring latex, or water-based, paint. You can easily tell if your paint is oil-based if, on the label, it says a solvent such as paint thinner, mineral spirits or brush cleaner must be used for clean-up.

If your paint is latex or water-based paint, you can properly dispose of it at home. The easiest way is to use it up on your own. If you absolutely do not have any use for the paint, donate it to someone who does – neighbor, friend, relative, community service organization, theater group or recreation department. If this is not an option, you can dispose of it according to the following instructions:

- Find an area that is protected from children, pets and rain, and has adequate air flow, such as a stable shelf in a garage or shed.
- Remove lid and allow liquids to evaporate. Stir it occasionally to break the surface film, allowing evaporation to proceed. Depending on the paint, this process can take several days to several weeks. It works best for small quantities (1-2 inches on bottom of can).
- For larger quantities, mix an equal amount of an absorbent material - cat litter, or sawdust – in with the paint. Allow to dry.
- After the paint is dry, throw the can of dried paint into your own trash. Be sure to keep the lid off the can so the hauler can see the hardened paint.

In its hardened form, the paint is no longer an environmental hazard.

To avoid throwing old paint out, remember to follow storage instructions on the paint can as freezing can damage the paint and make it unusable. Also, after using a portion of the can, place the can upside down to prevent drying out and write the “date opened” on the can to keep track of the paint’s age.

For more information about HTRP or responsible latex paint disposal, please call 734.222.6874.

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