



ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
AND SAFETY

HAZARDOUS MATERIAL FACT SHEET

Paint and Paint Related Materials Disposal

Most paints are either a water-based formula or an oil-based formula. Water-based formulas are sometimes referred to as latex, vinyl or acrylic. Oil-based formulas are sometimes referred to as alkyd, polyurethane or varnish. Paints may be regulated as a “hazardous waste” when disposed of, depending on the formulation.

Oil-based paints are regulated due to their flammability and the presence of regulated solvents such as xylene and toluene. Water-based paints are generally not regulated since they are nonflammable. However, paints (both water-based and oil-based) that contain metallic pigments are regulated as a hazardous waste when disposed. These regulated metals include the following: cadmium, chromium, lead, silver, barium, mercury, arsenic and selenium. Information concerning the presence of regulated materials and the type of formulation can be obtained from the label and/or the safety data sheet (SDS).

- **Water-based Paint**

If you have a lot of latex paint to dispose of, please contact Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) at <mailto:unmcehs@unmc.edu>. The disposal of small quantities of water-based paints that do not contain any regulated metals can be accomplished by spreading the paint on a piece of plastic or cardboard and allowing it to air dry. For drying purposes, the paint should be dried in a well-ventilated area that is protected from rain and the paint should not be spread thicker than one inch. When the paint has completely dried, it can be disposed in the normal trash. Never place wet paint in the trash as this practice is barred by local regulations. When washing paint brushes, pans, and related materials that have been used with water-based paint, always use a drain that is connected to the sanitary sewer. Never wash paints to the storm sewer.

- **Oil-based Paint**

Where possible, substitute water-based paint for oil-based paint. Excess oil-based paints must be properly tagged for pick up by Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) personnel for proper disposal. This material cannot be dried and placed in the general trash. Requests for pick-ups can be submitted on-line at: [Chemical Waste Pick-up Request](#).

- **Paint Thinner**

Used paint thinners must be collected and properly tagged for pick up by EHS personnel for proper disposal. Collect used thinners in a metal can with a tight fitting lid labeled as “Used Paint Thinners.” Thinners can be recycled by placing the used thinners in a can allowing the paint solids to settle for several weeks. After the paint solids have settled, the clear supernatant can be poured off and reused, and the remaining solids disposed via EHS. Items must be properly tagged for disposal. Requests for pick-ups can be submitted on-line at: [Chemical Waste Pick-up Request](#).

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Please call 402.559.6356 or
email unmcehs@unmc.edu with any questions