



Save Green by Painting Green

By Ed Dockter, December 2007

Water-based or latex paints can be recycled, while oil-based paints that use petrochemicals rather than water as the solvent, cannot. Two basic methods for recycling latex paint exist.

One involves reblending. Paints are sorted by type — interior or exterior, color, and finish, high gloss versus flat. Reblending is a two-step process that involves remixing the paint and then screening it to remove any hardened material and to improve consistency.

The manufacturer repackages the paint without adding new paint or making other modifications. Reblending is limited to fairly neutral colors and works best for applications where color matching is not an issue, such as undercoating, , and some exterior applications.

The second method is reprocessing, which can include adding new paint and other components, such as resins, that enhance the paint for the customer's specific purposes. Reprocessed paint often is available in more colors, since it can be tinted to achieve color matches.

The best ways to find sources for recycled paint are to contact paint dealers or search online for recyclers.

Facility operators or managers can achieve several benefits from specifying recycled paint for use in certain projects. Among them; lower cost, resource conservation, reduced volatile organic compounds (VOC) emission, and reduced waste.

Reusing 10 gallons of paint saves enough energy to power an average household for one month. And, at a typical cost of zero to \$10 dollars a gallon, it is a very economical painting solution.

Performance-price comparisons between new and recycled paints have been very favorable to recycled paints. In one well-documented case, Portland's Water Bureau used 100 percent recycled paint to refurbish the town's water tanks. The bureau purchased the recycled paint from local producers who had collected leftover paints from the city's recycling program. The recycled paint cost 75 percent less than new latex paint. On just the initial pilot, the project generated savings of \$3,500.