

Disposing of Paint the Right Way

In order to save tax dollars the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) will no longer collect paint at the Household Hazardous Waste Collection. Oil-based paint should be saved for special (Tipton County) collections. Latex paint, however, is not a hazardous waste but instead is a nuisance waste. It can be placed in the regular trash once it is dry. Latex paint in the liquid form will splatter when compacted by the trash truck creating an unsightly and unfortunately, a permanent mess on the street. Please follow these simple directions to properly solidify any leftover latex paint and "Stop the Splat".

- **Figure it Out-** First determine if the paint is latex or oil-based. Latex paint is called "water based" and cleans up with water. Oil-based paint, also called "alkyd" paint, cleans up with solvent instead of water. Oil-based paint should be saved for special collections.
- **Use it Up-** Be a wise consumer and buy only the paint that is needed. Remember that one gallon of paint will cover between 250 and 350 square feet, depending on how porous the surface is to be covered.
- **Use it Anyway-** If you do not like the color, remember that the paint can be mixed with another color or used as a primer coat, or on jobs where the final finish is not significant such as a dog house or closet.
- **Pass it On-** Check with your local school drama department, local theatre group, or even a neighbor that might need some extra paint.
- **Store it Properly-** Try to keep some extra paint for touch-ups and possible matching in the future. To keep paint fresh, cover the opening of the paint can with plastic wrap by stretching the plastic tightly, and then secure the lid. Be sure that the can is leak proof and then turn the can upside down to create a tight seal. Store it in a room with a moderate temperature.
- **Dry It Up-** If you still have extra latex paint, now it is time to dry it up. Never put liquid paint into the trash or down the drain. Follow these simple steps:
 - Air drying is acceptable for an inch or less of latex paint. Just remove the lid and let the paint dry in a well ventilated area. Be sure to keep away from pets or small children.
 - Commercial hardeners are available at most hardware and home supply stores.
 - Kitty litter may also be used and is the least expensive method to dry paint. Just pour the kitty litter into the can of latex paint, stir, and let it dry. Wait an hour and add more kitty litter if necessary until the paint is solidified.
 - Shredded newspaper, sawdust, and mulch may also be used when solidifying paint.
 - If the can of latex paint is too full to add solidifiers, line a cardboard box with a plastic trash bag. Pour the latex paint into the box one layer at a time. Add a solidifying agent, such as kitty litter, in between layers. When the paint is dry tie the trash bag and place in the regular trash.
 - Once the latex paint has solidified, it is safe to dispose of it in the regular trash. Just place the can in a trash bag, but leave the lid off so that the garbage truck driver can see that it is not harmful since it has been solidified. Also remember that metal cans and lids can be recycled if they are clean and dry.
 - Never pour paint into storm drains, a sink or a toilet since this can harm sewage treatment systems and create environmental hazards for both humans and wildlife. Remember that this process works for latex paint only. Any oil-based (alkyd) paint should be saved for special (Tipton County) collections.

View YouTube video at: [Stop the Splat!](#)

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