



Green Ideas

eSafetyLine Greener Paint

Most everyone agrees that any room will look better with a fresh coat of paint. It is a relatively easy, cheap way to spruce up a room. However, it can present dangers to you and your family. Paint is made up of 3 main parts: pigments to give color, binders to make the paint stick when it's applied and the carrier or solvent which keeps the paint liquid and evaporates once the paint is exposed to air. Additives like chalk (which is nontoxic) are sometimes added to thicken paint. Mold resistant paint contains toxic additives that help to kill off the mold.

The greatest danger from paint comes in the form of VOCs or Volatile Organic Compounds. These are found mainly in the pigments used but depending on the type of paint, in the carrier as well. Colorants are typically added to white base paint to get the desired color when the paint is bought. The level of VOCs varies depending on color; deeper, brighter colors will have more pigment which increases the VOC level.

Oil paints use solvents that come from petroleum-based chemical. On the plus side, these paints are highly durable, scrubbable and water resistant. This makes them a great fit for kitchens, bathrooms and hallways. They also usually require fewer coats. Oil paints contain more compounds known to have health effects like formaldehyde, toluene and benzene and take longer to dry. This allows higher concentrations of VOCs to be released for longer periods of time. Clean-up of oil paint requires solvents that also release more VOCs.

Latex paints use water as the carrier instead of a petroleum-based solvent. This translates to lower VOC levels. Low and no VOC latex paints are available and perform well for most household duties and a high quality latex can be as durable as oil paints. Latex paints are free of toxins to kill mold to start with but most

manufacturers add synthetic biocides or “can preservatives” to extend shelf life. They are not required to list biocides as ingredients because they are added in such small amounts. You can always contact the manufacturer to find out if biocides are included in a specific paint.

Natural paints are made mostly from renewable or abundant naturally occurring materials like citrus oils, lime, clay, linseed oil and chalk. Since they contain no petroleum products they emit few if any of the dangerous VOCs found in other paint types, though there may be significant amounts of other VOCs from citrus-based solvents. Although natural paints are a healthier choice for you family and the environment, they have some disadvantages. They can be costly- 20 to 80% more than latex or oil paints and many paint stores don't sell them. Natural paints take 2 or more days to dry rather than the 1 day of latex and aren't always compatible with existing latex paint surface so this will require more prepping and priming.

As with any “greener” choice, when choosing the right paint for you consider your family's needs and balance that with a concern for the planet at large.

Discussion Questions

What are the 3 components of any paint?

Which paint colors usually release more VOCs?

MEETING / TRAINING ATTENDANCE ROSTER

COMPANY: _____

_____ SAFETY MEETING

JOB/DEPT: _____

_____ SAFETY TRAINING

DATE: ___/___/___

TIME: _____

TOPICS ADDRESSED: _____

EMPLOYEE'S SIGNATURES

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

EMPLOYEE SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: _____

ACTION TAKEN: _____

Supervisor's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date

Safety Coordinator's Signature

_____/_____/_____
Date