

Paint

Paint and varnish are the most common household products that become household hazardous waste.

Aerosol paint cans that still contain paint are accepted at the household hazardous waste collection events. Please see Aerosols for information on the recycling of aerosol paint cans that contain a small amount of liquid or are empty.

Oil based paint, turpentine, paint remover, paint thinner, shellac, stains / varnishes, furniture stripper, and finisher and wall paper cement are all accepted at the household hazardous waste collection events.

Latex paint is not considered hazardous waste and is not accepted at household hazardous waste (HHW) events. Unfortunately, latex paint does find its way to HHW events. In 2009, at HHW events, Montgomery County collected 188,000 pounds of latex paint and non-hazardous materials that cost \$65,737 to dispose of. This happens for a number of different reasons:

- Owner of paint is uneducated about the proper way to dispose of latex paint.
- Owner of paint sees HHW events as an easier disposal alternative than the proper method.
- Label on paint can is too old or unreadable, thus making it impossible to determine its type.
- Owner of paint is moving and will not have time to dispose of paint properly.

By diverting latex paint from household hazardous waste collections, Montgomery County could save valuable tax payer dollars and perhaps provide additional services or events.

How to Solidify Water-Based (Latex) Paint

When solidifying paint, the same safety precautions should be taken for painting walls and other surfaces. (ie: wear gloves, don't smoke, keep area ventilated) There are a couple of different methods depending on how much paint you have:

- **Slowest method** - Recommended for small amounts of paint. Take cans outside or to a well ventilated area and leave the lids off. Let cans sit until fully dry/hard. This may take weeks or months depending on the amount of paint in the can(s).
- **Faster method** - Take an absorbent material such as kitty litter, sand, saw-dust, or paint hardener that is sold in paint and home improvement stores and add to the paint. Stir paint. The paint will absorb to these materials and speed along the drying process. The drying time depends on the amount of paint you have, and the amount of absorbent material you add.
- **For large quantities** - Dump paint into an old bucket or trash bag lined cardboard box. Add absorbent material and stir. You may want to add absorbent material first to ease the mixing process.

For all methods, To ensure latex paint is dry, plunge a screwdriver or other tool into the paint. If it does not penetrate, paint is dry. **Once water based paint (latex) is dry it is safe to throw in the trash (not the recycling container).**