



# Strive for 75% Fact Sheet Unwanted Paint



*Every year roughly 1.3 million gallons of paint go unused in Missouri!*

## The Challenge With Unwanted Paint

Every year, Americans generate over 64 million gallons of leftover household paint – enough to fill almost 100 Olympic-sized swimming pools. Although paint is highly reusable and recyclable, most leftover latex paint ends up in landfills. Oil-based paint, is hazardous waste and is the **most expensive product** for household hazardous waste (HHW) programs to manage, costing local governments across the country 50% of their total HHW program budget. MORA supports Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws as a long-term strategy to divert paint from landfills and to improve access to convenient paint collection sites across Missouri. Until EPR is a reality in Missouri, the best way to deal with unwanted paint is to not create it in the first place. Here are some steps to reduce unwanted paint.

### 1 Buy Only What Is Needed For The Project

Buying the correct volume of paint saves money and eliminates the need to manage left-overs. Use this formula to estimate the total number of gallons needed before you go to the paint store.

#### A. Determine the total surface area (square feet) to be painted.

1. Multiply the length times the height of each wall.  
Example: 10' tall x 10' wide = 100 square feet.
2. Add together the surface area of each wall.

#### B. Choose the coverage rate from this table.

Paint and Surface Characteristics	Coverage (square feet per gallon)
Thick or textured paints applied to rough exterior surfaces (stucco, brick, siding)	100
Paint applied to rough or textured surfaces	200
Heavy coat applied to semi-smooth surfaces (usually interior: walls, doors, trim)	300
Paint applied to smooth surfaces	400
Paint applied to very smooth surfaces	500

#### C. Calculate using this formula:

Total Surface Area ÷ Coverage = # of Gallons Needed Per Coat

### 2 Store Paint to Keep It Fresh

Proper storage of leftover paint helps it last for years. Cover the opening with plastic wrap, and make sure the lid fits securely over the plastic so the paint doesn't leak. Store the paint can upside down to create a tight seal, keeping the paint fresh to use again. Store paint at temperatures to avoid freezing. Be sure to choose a location with good ventilation and out of the reach of children and pets.

### 3 Use Leftovers

Use the last inch-or-two remaining in the can at the end of the project. Leftover paint can be used for touch-up jobs and smaller projects. You also can blend and mix smaller quantities of similar colors of latex paint to use as a primer on larger jobs, or jobs where the final finish is not critical. If you have too much to use, see if others could use it, such as family, friends, neighbors, local theatre groups, church groups, and other organizations.

## What Happens to Collected Paint?

Latex paint is simply blended with other paints into a neutral color or it can be remanufactured with new materials to create new paint that is quality tested and sold. Oil-based paint cannot be recycled, and is used in hazardous waste fuel blends or simply incinerated.



MORA provides value by connecting people, offering industry insights, and influencing policy to support our economy and businesses in extracting the highest and best use of materials at end of life. Join and support MORA in leading the state to 75% Waste Diversion!

Details and additional paint resources at [www.mora.org](http://www.mora.org)

## Extender Producer Responsibility

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) laws are an effective solution for providing consumers with a responsible and convenient way to dispose of unused paint while reducing the financial burden on local governments. The American Coatings Association, which represents paint manufacturers in the United States, actively supports EPR legislation through the industry led end-of-life management program for post-consumer paint called PaintCare®.

PaintCare® enables paint retail stores to act as collection sites for consumer paint without burdensome and costly requirements. Existing HHW programs can also be part of the paint collection network. PaintCare® was modeled after the 2011 State of Oregon law, the first state to pass EPR legislation for paint. Since then, eight states and the District of Columbia have passed legislation modeled after the Oregon law.

EPR in Missouri would eliminate the gaps in convenient and cost-effective paint recovery through local HHW programs and save limited HHW funds for other materials. EPR is a policy strategy promoted by MORA to help the state reach a 75% waste diversion goal by the year 2025.

### Still Have Leftovers? Proper Paint Disposal

Even with the best intentions, unwanted paint happens. If the paint cannot be reused or donated, recycling is the next best option, if a local HHW collection program is available. Contact your local solid waste management

district for collection program availability or go to [www.Earth911.com](http://www.Earth911.com) to find a location near you.

If recycling is not possible, do not discard liquid paints in your trash. A small amount of latex paint (less than 1/2 inch) is easily dried out by leaving the lid off. Once the paint is hard it can be placed in the trash. Larger volumes of latex paint can be poured into an absorbent such as un-clumping cat litter, sawdust, or shredded newspaper. Let it dry completely and dispose of the dried material in the trash. It is not safe to dry out oil-based paint.



### Recycling Paint and Aerosol Containers

Steel paint cans and aerosols be recycled in any program that accepts steel cans. Plastic paint cans (typically #1 or #2 plastic) are also recyclable in community programs. Make sure the container is completely empty and dry. A thin layer of dry paint on the bottom or sides is usually acceptable. For aerosols, do not puncture or crush the can. Make sure the can is completely empty.



Funding provided by the St. Louis-Jefferson Solid Waste Management District, Region F Solid Waste Management District and in part by the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

