

The building environment you work in

Over 414 million litres of paint are sold in the UK each year (retail and trade), of which an estimated 80 million litres (enough to fill 50 Olympic-sized swimming pools) are stored in homes and garages, or just thrown away in landfill.

To meet targets for emissions of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), high gloss paint will be banned by 2010.

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Construction waste - the key facts

Waste is 'any substance or object that the holder discards, or intends to discard'.

You have a **Duty of Care** to know what is in your waste, that the person you are giving it to is licensed to carry it and that it is disposed of in a licensed site.

- **SUB-CONTRACTORS** - who give waste to a main contractor, are still responsible for those wastes under the Duty of Care.
- **MOVING WASTE** - if you transport your own waste, you need to be registered as a waste carrier with your Environmental Regulator.
- **HAZARDOUS WASTE** - most building sites need to be registered if they produce hazardous waste.
- If your work produces unacceptable levels of dust and odour, the Local Authority Environmental Health Department can stop you working.
- If you are working in a domestic property, you are allowed to wash brushes in the sink if the property has a mains sewerage connection.
- Water and chemicals from the washing of paint and painting equipment are not allowed to enter surface water drains or to soak into the ground.
- The Landfill Directive bans the disposal of liquid wastes to landfill. Before you decide to dispose of surplus paint, assess whether you can use it elsewhere.

Types of waste

There are three main types of construction waste distinguished by their environmental impact. Each is sent to a different type of landfill site.

Inert waste - includes set concrete, bricks, glass, tiles - not often produced by decorators!

Non-hazardous waste - includes timber, paper, plastic, powder fillers, empty tins and tubes, acrylic filler, linseed oil, wallpaper paste, PVA, putty, emulsion paint.

Hazardous waste - includes solvent-based paints, varnishes, sealants, wood stains and wood preservers, some border adhesives, lead paint (and burnt-off lead paint), two-part fillers, some mastics, solvent-based paint remover, brick cleaner, spray paints, lime wash, fire-retardant paints.

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Things you can do

We are all aiming for the best practical environmental option - a balance between getting the job done well and considering the environmental impact. Using the best environmental option can also save you money.

You should:

- Know the types of waste you produce.
- Reduce the cleaning of brushes and rollers by:
 - suspending brushes in water overnight;
 - wrapping rollers in a carrier bag;
 - using a 'brush mate' wet paintbrush storage system.
- Read the label of the products you are using.
- Wash out emulsion paint tins and use them as paint kettles.
- Mix together leftover paints and re-use them as undercoat.
- Clearly label and leave some unused paints on-site for touching up.
- If you are disposing of tins containing water-based paint or paint residue, store them securely, remove the lids and allow the paint to harden before disposal.
- Re-use solvents and cleaning fluids after settlement.
- Investigate www.communityrepaint.org.uk that runs a paint recycling scheme for leftover paint.

- Consider using natural paints - clay and linseed oil based.
- Know when your site should be registered for hazardous waste.
- Know how to fill in a waste transfer note.

Coming your way soon

The law on environmental issues is constantly changing. Some initiatives you should know about are:

WEEE - Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment Regulations affect all forms of electrical equipment, from mobile phones to battery power tools. These will be classified as hazardous waste and need to be deconstructed before disposal.

Batteries Directive - on the use and disposal of batteries.

Site waste management plans - do you have one?

Landfill Directive regulates the types of waste that can be sent to landfill and sets pretreatment targets.

Like to know some more?

The **waste hierarchy** defines a number of methods of waste disposal from least to most harmful to the environment. The order is **reduce, re-use, recycle, landfill**.

Landfill tax is paid to HM Revenue and Customs for each tonne of waste sent to landfill. The rate is reviewed annually. Inert waste has stayed at

£2.00 per tonne. Non-hazardous waste is £21.00 per tonne and will rise to a target of £35.00 per tonne.

European waste codes (EWC) are standard codes for all types of waste based on their source. An example for paint is 08 01 11* waste paint and varnish containing organic solvents or other dangerous substances. The * refers to the hazardous nature of the waste.

Waste transfer notes are a form that should be filled in and accompany any load of waste leaving site (listing the EWC).

Want some help?

Paint stripping:

www.ecosolutions.co.uk

Natural paints:

www.auro.co.uk

Non-hazardous products:

www.greenbuildingstore.co.uk

On paints:

www.greenspec.co.uk/html/design/materials/woodpaints.html

Details on recycling:

www.wrap.org.uk

Legal obligations with respect to waste management:

www.netregs.gov.uk

Hazardous waste:

www.environment-agency.gov.uk

www.envirowise.gov.uk/construction



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Envirowise - Practical Environmental Advice for Business - is a Government programme that offers free, independent and practical advice to UK businesses to reduce waste at source and increase profits. It is managed by Momenta, an operating division of AEA Technology plc, and Serco TTI.



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