



Focus

Inventory Control for the Paint Contracting Industry

The Issue

Controlling inventory is a key step in reducing purchasing and waste disposal costs. The following are some ideas about how to effectively control your inventory of paint and solvents. Some of these may already be common practice for you, others may be new ideas to try.

Buy only the paint you need. Bulk order, then trickle the supply

Bulk order 90% of your estimated material needs for the job and then finish out that job by buying just enough paint in smaller quantities. This will reduce your inventory of leftover paint.

Label paints left for touch-up and educate customers about storage

Leaving paint with the customer for touch-up later is a great way to reduce paint waste. One way to really improve service is to label the paint can with information about where in the building it was used, the application date, and what the custom color is (if applicable). Also, be sure the brand name is still visible. Educate the customer about air-tight storage techniques such as tightly sealing the lid and storing it upside down to keep it fresh.

Use up all your paint

Blend leftover paint and reuse it. It is often possible to use leftover paints on another job site as a primer or undercoat. Compatible light color paints can also often be mixed together for reuse.

Store it so you can see what you have

One way to keep inventory visible is to make narrow, open shelving so that paint is stored only one can deep, not hidden behind other cans. Locate the shelf where you'll walk by it every day. Consolidate partial containers of compatible paint. Remember to check the shelf before you order new paint.

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Give away your unused paint

Before your paint reaches the end of its shelf life, consider whether or not you'll ever be able to use it. If not, have a "paint give away" in your parking lot or donate it to community groups, schools, churches or others who want it.

Reuse solvents into paint

Allow the paint solids in the solvent used for brush and spray gun cleaning to settle back down into the bottom of the container. By decanting the clear solvent at the top for reuse, the paint "solids" at the bottom can be added back into the paint to thin it out. You can cut your solvent costs by using this recycled solvent for initial cleaning of dirty equipment and using only a small amount of new solvent for final cleaning.

Warehouse controller

Dedicate an employee to controlling the flow of your inventory. This person should be responsible for purchasing materials, as well as for the flow of materials in and out of the warehouse or storage area. By dedicating one person to this task, it is easier to keep your inventory under control.

Speculative accumulation – Is it a product or a waste?

The reuse of paints is strongly encouraged, however, contractors should not accumulate paints past their shelf life or without having a plan to use them. If there is little evidence to support a claim that materials can or will be used as products, Ecology may declare them to be wastes. The owner of the materials must then determine whether they are dangerous wastes and manage them accordingly.

Inventory Control

Bulk order/trickle
Label paints left for touch-up
Reuse solvent into paint
Speculative accumulation

For More Information

For further assistance in reducing and properly managing your surface preparation wastes, call the nearest Ecology regional office and ask to speak to a Toxics Reduction or Hazardous Waste Specialist

Central Regional Office	(509) 575-2491
Eastern Regional Office	(509) 456- 2926
Southwest Regional Office	(360) 407-6300
Northwest Regional Office	(425) 649-7000

If you have special accommodation needs or require this publication in alternative format, please contact David Zink at (360)407-6752 (Voice) or (360) 407-6066 (TDD).

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