HOW TO PROPERLY DISPOSE OF PAINT

What to do with left-over paint is one of the most popular questions asked of Westmoreland Cleanways and Recycling. Following are some general guidelines for proper disposal of the material:

- Any paint, latex or oil-based, that has dried and hardened in the can may be thrown away in the normal trash. Any can with less than one inch of liquid may be thrown away in the normal trash.

- Latex paint is considered non-hazardous and can be dried and thrown away with normal household trash. One effective method involves pouring the paint over an absorbent substance, such as clay-based cat litter or shredded newspaper. Let the cat litter or newspaper dry, put it in a plastic bag and throw away. Let the cans dry and put them in the trash with the lids removed.

- A paint hardener such as "Krud Kutter Waste Paint Hardener," can be used to dry and dispose of latex and oil-based paint. Many such products are a powder which is poured directly into the paint. Once the paint hardens it can be thrown away with your normal trash. A variety of paint hardeners can be found at local paint retailers.

- If a product like Krud Kutter is not used, oil-based paint is considered hazardous and should be disposed at a household hazardous waste collection event.

How Much Paint Do I *Really* Need?

The most effective way to reduce the amount of paint for disposal is to purchase only the amount you need to complete the job. To determine the amount of paint you will need, first determine the square footage to be painted, and then divide that by the number of square feet a gallon of paint will cover (approximately 400 sq. ft.). For example, how much paint would be needed using two coats of paint for a 12 foot by 15 foot room with an 8 foot ceiling, one door, and two windows?

Measure the total distance (perimeter) around the room (12 ft. + 15 ft.) x 2 = 54 ft.

2) Multiply the perimeter by the ceiling height to find the total wall area: 54 ft. x 8 ft. = 432 sq. ft.

3) Subtract the square feet of the doors (usually 21 square feet) and the windows (15 square feet each for this example) from 432 sq. ft. (which we determined to be the total wall area): 432 -21 sq. ft. (doors, 1 x 21) - 30 sq .ft. (windows, 2 x 15) = 381 sq. ft. The total square footage to be painted is 381 sq. ft.

4) Multiply that by the number of coats needed, 2 x 381 sq. ft. = 762 sq. ft.

5) Generally, one gallon of paint will cover 400 square feet. (However, coverage is affected by the texture of the surface and quality of the paint). 762 sq. ft. / 400 sq. ft. = 1.9 gallons of paint.