

State begins effort to keep paint out of area landfills

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Oregon will launch the nation's first statewide paint recycling program as soon as January.

The four-year pilot project will make recycling more convenient throughout the state particularly in areas without existing programs. Nearly one-third of Oregon's counties do not recycle paint, which is the number-one household hazardous waste in Oregon.

The program is part of a bill the Legislature recently passed and the governor is expected to sign.

"This is a landmark bill," said Ted Hughes, the director of Pacific Northwest Paint Council and a lobbyist for the paint and coatings industry.

Paint manufacturers worked with the state to craft the law and hope to use the program as a model for a national effort to reduce the amount of paint going into landfills.

The law would require paint manufacturers to develop, operate and pay for the program, which would function similar to Oregon's E-Cycle for electronics.

The move was part good Samaritan and part self-preservation. The industry wants to do the right thing, but they also believe such programs will eventually be required, and they prefer to design their own.

"The world is kind of moving that way and the paint industry knows that," said Palmer Mason, a legislative analyst with the state Department of Environmental Quality.

"It would be nice if there were other industries that would step up in the same way," he said.

Similar bills addressing take-back programs for rechargeable batteries, mercury lighting and pharmaceuticals didn't pass this session because of industry resistance.

But manufacturers aren't the only ones who pay under the take-back programs. The cost of paint likely would increase under the new Oregon law. Mason estimated an increase of 30 cents to 40 cents per gallon, and Hughes said a similar program in Canada meant \$4 more per gallon.

Producer responsibility advocates say the price increases reflect the true cost of the product — otherwise manufacturers rely on taxpayers to pay for disposal.



Kobbi R. Blair | Statesman Journal
Paint is collected for recycling at the Salem-Keizer Recycling and Transfer Station.

The basics

Here's how you can recycle your paint or reuse your neighbor's paint:

Recycle

-Marion County and West Salem residents can place up to two gallons of latex paint in sealed, labeled buckets in the red bin on their scheduled recycling day. Haulers will not accept rusty cans, hardened paint, oil-based paint or stain or specialty paint with texture. For more information call your garbage hauler or the Mid-Valley Garbage and Recycling Association at (503) 390-4000.

-Drop paint off at Salem-Keizer Recycling and Transfer Station, 3250 Deer Park Drive SE, Salem, (503) 588-5169 or North Marion County Disposal Facility, 17827 Whitney Lane NE, Woodburn (503) 588-5169.

Details about the paint program, including price, scope and collection locations, have yet to be determined, although recycling sites likely will include paint stores, transfer stations and maybe landfills. The industry will work with DEQ to develop the program and launch as soon as January, Hughes said.

The industry has a good model to follow.

"We've been doing this in Canada for 12 years now. We know how to recover all our products," Hughes said.

It's also unclear how the program will effect Oregon's existing paint recovery efforts, although Hughes said they likely will benefit.

Hughes expects a lot of the paint will end up at Portland's Metro Paint, an operation that sorts latex paint by color and sells it at stores throughout the state. Local municipalities will also benefit, he said, because the new programs will ease the strain on their recovery programs.

Marion County already recycles about 35,000 gallons of latex paint per year through its curbside hazardous waste collection, one of the few in the country. But paint still ends up in the trash, said Marion County Recycling Coordinator Bailey Payne.

The new program could help capture the rest, he said, or even take over for the county.

"It's a good thing for Oregon," he said, "and it's a good thing for us."

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Reuse

-Pick up free paint in various shades of gray at Salem-Keizer Recycling and Transfer Station, 3250 Deer Park Drive SE, Salem, (503) 588-5169 or North Marion County Disposal Facility, 17827 Whitney Lane NE, Woodburn (503) 588-5169.

-Metro Paint is recycled latex paint sorted into 15 colors and sold at various locations around the state including two in Salem: Rick's Bargain Center, 2973 12th St. SE, (503) 363-9070 and Miller Paint, 390 Lancaster Drive NE, (503) 364-2264. For more information, go to their Web site at www.metro-region.org/paint or call (503) 234-3000.

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