

Improving Paint Recycling in Michigan

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THE PROBLEM

The current system for managing unused architectural paint in Michigan places the burden of proper disposal and recycling of unused paint on local government. The American Coatings Association and the U.S. EPA estimates that 10 percent of all architectural paint sold each year in Michigan goes unused.

Currently, most Michigan residents do not have access to convenient paint collection and recycling opportunities, so millions of gallons of unused paint are either being disposed of through the municipal solid waste stream, collected by a local household hazardous waste (HHW) program at the expense of the local government, stockpiled by the consumer, or simply released into the environment. These behaviors result in costs to society in the form of environmental impacts associated with landfilling or dumping unused paint and disposal costs to the local HHW collection program.

The cost to properly manage unused paint is \$8 per gallon to the publically operated HHW program. Nationally, post-consumer paint is the largest component of local HHW collection programs at 50% of total collected materials by weight. Properly collected, unused paint is a highly reusable and recyclable material that is converted to products ranging from new paint, plastics and cement additives or burned for energy.

THE NEED

The lack of public awareness and convenient, efficient infrastructure to collect and effectively manage unused paint is further complicated by the lack of regulatory framework to incentivize or require manufacturers, distributors, retailers and consumers of architectural paint to consider the impacts of improper management and even internalize the cost of end-of-life management of unused paint.

The problem has been mounting since local governments began collecting household hazardous waste in the early 1990s to mitigate the negative impacts of HHW, including unused paint, disposed of in landfills or released into the environment.

THE CHOICE

A few alternatives have been explored to address this issue.

Alternative 1: Do nothing. Michigan residents will continue to improperly dispose of unused paint or take it to a local HHW collection site, if available, where the local unit of government educate residents and pay to have the materials properly disposed of or recycled.

Alternative 2: Develop and support legislation that establishes an advanced disposal fee on architectural paint products that will be used to fund Household Hazardous Waste collections in 83 Michigan counties. The State of Michigan would organize, implement, and operate the public collection program

Alternative 3: Support legislation that satisfies the requirements of the American Coatings Association (ACA) to establish a PaintCare program in Michigan. This legislation places an assessment fee on the wholesale price of architectural paint to all distributors and retailers in Michigan and is included in the final consumer purchase price. The manufacturers would pay this fee to fund the PaintCare program and a state oversight function.

THE PROPOSAL

The American Coatings Association, PaintCare program is active in eight states across the country. This industry-led solution relieves the financial burden of paint management currently carried by local and state government. The shift of this burden from the public sector to paint manufacturers, retailers and consumers increases access to recycling opportunities that have been shown to increase the rate of paint reuse and recycling in other states where it has been implemented.