

12 - Working With Paint: Safety Training

EH&S – MGA

Goals: This safety session should teach employees that:

- A. Even a commonplace activity like painting has hazards.
- B. Painting has both physical and health hazards.
- C. It's important to follow proper cleanup, storage, and disposal procedures.

OSHA Regulation: 29 CFR 1910.94, 107, 132, 134, 1000, and 1200

1. Always read safety data sheets (SDSs) and labels before you paint.

- A. Because there are so many types of paints designed for different purposes, you can't assume you know what hazards may be involved.
- B. Common precautions include good ventilation, protection against fire, and using personal protective equipment (PPE).
- C. Use water-based paints wherever possible—as a general rule, there are fewer hazards associated with their use.

2. Paints and the solvents used with them have physical hazards.

- A. Many are flammable, so it is important to use them in a well-ventilated area where there is no contact with an ignition source.
- B. Another potential hazard is explosion. For example, a closed paint container that's exposed to high heat could explode.
- C. Store paint and solvent containers away from heat.
- D. Yet another hazard to watch out for is reactivity. Some chemicals in paints become hazardous if mixed with or exposed to other substances.

3. Paints can also be a source of both short- and long-term health hazards.

- A. If you inhale too much paint vapor or mist, you run the risk of such short-term physical problems as eye irritation, sore throat, cough, runny nose, fatigue, or dizziness.
- B. Paint on your skin can cause short-term rashes or swelling.
- C. Flush eyes with water for at least 15 minutes after contact with paint, solvents, or thinners, and get medical attention.
- D. More serious, however, are long-term, chronic ailments that develop over time. These may include damage to the liver, kidneys, or lungs, or problems with the digestive or central nervous system.
- E. Also, especially with certain paints called polyisocyanates, you can become sensitized. Once you become sensitized to a substance, you risk serious skin and respiratory problems, even possibly permanent lung damage.
- F. There's also a risk of serious health hazards when you're removing paint.
- G. If you're removing older paint that may contain lead, you'll have to be fully equipped with PPE—including respirators.

4. The need to protect yourself is obvious as soon as you realize the serious nature of the hazards associated with various kinds of paint.

- A. **Ventilate.** Paint only in a well-ventilated area, whether you're painting at work or at home. It will reduce the chances that you'll inhale harmful vapors. Move into fresh air if you have symptoms of overexposure and see a doctor if symptoms persist.
- B. **Avoid ignition sources.** This is particularly important in a paint spray booth; but even with good ventilation, many paints are very flammable. No smoking should be allowed anywhere there is painting.
- C. **Use proper PPE.** The most common items are gloves, coveralls, long-sleeved shirts, and safety glasses or other face protection. Spray booth work usually requires respirators as well as specific training about hazards.
- D. **Protective skin creams.** These can help protect the skin from irritation and make it easier to clean up using soap and water instead of irritating solvents, which should always be avoided, if possible.

5. Follow these additional tips for safe painting:

- A. Use paint only from labeled containers—report missing or illegible labels.
- B. Don't mix paints with other substances—including water—unless the SDS tells you it's not a reactive substance.
- C. Keep paint containers closed and tightly sealed when not in use. D. Be careful when working on ladders and scaffolds to prevent falls. E. Dispose of empty paint containers promptly and properly.
- F. Dispose of combustible rags in proper, closed containers that are emptied daily.
- G. Dispose of old paint according to proper disposal requirements.
 - 1. Water-based paints are not considered hazardous and may be disposed of with ordinary trash in solidified form. (To solidify, add mulch, cat litter, shredded paper, or paint hardener.)
 - 2. Organic solvent-based paints should be treated as hazardous waste and disposed of according to approved procedures.

Summation: Painting can be done safely if you follow the rules.

Know the product you are using, know its hazards, and follow the instructions on the label and the SDS to protect yourself.