C7 CONTRACTORS

C7 AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Not so long ago, it was common for fumes to drive people from their homes during repainting. Most conventional paints contained high levels of VOCs (volatile organic compounds) that produced a breathable gas when applied. The VOCs diminish air quality, and may be detrimental to your health. Today, alternative manufacturing techniques have allowed the development of low- and no-VOC paints that release no, or minimal VOC pollutants, and are virtually odor free.

Paints, adhesives, and other protective finishes are often formulated with solvents (or VOCs) to improve performance and durability. Additionally, paint cleanup often requires toxic solvents that release additional VOC pollutants. However, increased awareness of possible health risks and overall air quality concerns has led to a demand for products lower in VOCs. Manufacturers have therefore risen to the challenge, mainly by developing high-quality, latex-based coatings and adhesives for a wide variety of uses. Latex paints use water as their solvent and carrier, allowing both easier cleanup and generally lower toxicity than oil-based paints. Today, latex paints are equal or better in quality and durability than conventional oil-based formulas. Many stains and clear finishes for floors and cabinets are also commonly available.

It should be noted that not every latex-based coating is low in VOCs. Products may be described as low-VOC when they off-gas significantly less than other products. Some oil-based paints qualify as low-VOC because their formulas have been modified. VOC levels are expressed in pounds per gallon (lbs/gal) or grams per liter (g/l). Interior paint is given a Green Seal if it has a VOC content less than 50 g/l (for flat sheen) or 150 g/l (non-flat sheen).

For persons who are particularly sensitive, or have strong concerns about air quality, most major manufacturers now offer special no-VOC paints that are odorless and completely "VOC-free."