

# Changing VOC Regulations

*Can a proactive approach to green boost your bottom line?*

Is it too soon to think about green coatings? Some professional painting contractors, especially those in areas with minimal VOC regulations, may be asking themselves that question.

The answer, according to construction industry experts, is: Don't wait. It will pay for any painter to be proactive.

In his Detroit News column "The Handyman," Glenn Haegel wrote that one of the big moves toward more environmentally responsible products "has been in the paint and finishes industry, where you can find a variety of green paints, varnishes and paint strippers that are excellent, cost-effective and less harmful to human and environmental health."

Two reasons for this focus are consumer demand and current and forthcoming state laws regulating the VOCs in paint and other finishes, he says.

"California was the first state to enact laws limiting the VOC content in paints and coatings. New York, New Jersey, Texas and Arizona have already joined California with laws of their own, and it is expected that more states will soon follow."

So even if you work in areas that currently do not have highly restrictive VOC laws in place, now is the time to start planning for your transition.

A good example of this kind of forward-thinking is Stan Dauksza, owner of InterArt Décor Limited in Toronto. Early last year, he was already looking toward the future. He knew that Ontario painters would not be allowed to use oil-based paints in residential work in 2009. Rather than waiting for the new laws to be enacted, he decided to get a head start on his competition. Working in conjunction with Joe Mastromarco, his Sherwin-Williams sales rep, he began training his crews to use a latex primer on the company's trim work.

"Switching to this product resolves two things: quality and compliance with regulations," Dauksza says. Making the transition early meant he didn't have to scramble at the last minute to meet the new legal requirements. His painters are already comfortable with the product and no jobs or labor time will be lost.

"The laws are constantly evolving," says Steve Revnew of the Sherwin-Williams Company. "Ohio enacted new regulations in January. Illinois is in flux and could change at any time. New California laws were put in place last July. We expect to see changes in other parts of the country in 2010 or 2011."

If you are currently using alkyd products, you can start by asking your paint representative about water-based alternatives. "Generally, all of our latex coatings will meet most

regulations," Revnew says. "But the best bet is to make sure you're ready by planning ahead with the help of your Sherwin-Williams store. Our people get constant training, so they can keep you up-to-date on the latest legal requirements and recommend coatings to keep you compliant." **PPC**

**More states are enacting VOC rules, and nationwide laws could come in 2010.**

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