

How to Deal with Concerns

If it doesn't appear that the painters are following proper work procedures as outlined under The Painting Process, you should call the Maintenance or Safety contact person at _____, and identify yourself and the details of your concern. The contact person will respond with a site visit as quickly as possible.

If you find that the paint vapours significantly irritate you, even though you've prepared yourself for the painting project, you should contact the Building Manager and identify the issue or concern.

Both you and your supervisor should investigate alternatives (ie. Relocation, temporary alternative assignments, etc.) to remove yourself from the situation.

If you have technical questions or concerns that are not addressed in this brochure, you should call the Maintenance or Safety contact at _____, and identify yourself and outline your question. The Contact person will respond with a return call, if not present when you call.

If you have a question or concern that is NOT of a technical nature, you should contact the Building Site Manager and outline your question or concern.

This brochure was developed in consultation with:



Lakehead District School Board

Ontario Association of School Business Officials (Plant Operations Division)

For more information
contact ESAO at:

4950 Yonge Street, Suite 1505
Toronto, Ontario
M2N 6K1
Tel: 416-250-8005
Fax: 416-250-9190

Email: esao@esao.on.ca
Web-site: www.esao.on.ca

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Your Workplace is Being



Painted

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The Painting Process/Schedule

All common areas of buildings (i.e. Hallways, washrooms, etc.) should be painted on a regular basis. Other areas of buildings, like meeting rooms, offices, classrooms, etc. should be scheduled for painting when the area is not occupied.

It is recommended that to ensure occupant safety, the painters should:

- Ensure prior notification of painting through administration to staff, and the general public
- Provide adequate ventilation, maintaining a negative pressure in the area to be painted (whenever possible)
- Ensure that the return air system is temporarily covered
- Where deemed necessary, provide a commercial vapour extractor to reduce solvent vapour levels in the area.

MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following questions are most commonly asked by employees when painting is being done in their workplace.

1. Why can't the oil-based painting be scheduled after work hours?

The painters attempt at all times to restrict the application of oil-based paints to when an area is either not occupied, or when it will cause the least amount of interference. The "off gassing" of the paint will take a few days so even if the paint is applied after regular work hours, the vapours will still be present the next day.

2. Why aren't staff and the general public forewarned so that working areas can be relocated/rescheduled in advance? (One week would be nice!)

They should be. Building or Safety Contacts are told well in advance that the painters will be in the building at a certain time (at least 4 weeks). Staff and the general public should be advised by administration that painting will occur in order to identify staff who have chemical sensitivities or medical conditions that should be accommodated. In fact, all painters review a checklist with building administration prior to beginning of painting the building.

3. Is it possible to paint during holidays or breaks?

Absolutely, in fact in most cases this does happen. However, you must remember that we have a limited number of days when the building is closed and if painting was restricted to these times only, buildings would be painted every 50 years. Also the summer is the time when outside painting must be done.

4. Is there any type of paint with less reactive vapours?

The painters will use both enamel and latex paint. In all cases, they attempt to use "low odour" brands of paint. Both enamel and latex paints do contain substances that evaporate into the air. Although latex does not contain the same large amounts of hydrocarbons as enamel, it does contain glycol, which also evaporates into the air.

5. Are there any hazardous effects from paint vapours that I should be concerned about?

The concentration of paint vapours drops very quickly when outside the immediate area (beyond 2 metres from the source of paint). Testing has shown that the painter is the person most exposed to paint vapours, and in many cases, is the only person who could be over-exposed.

Rule of Thumb: If you can smell the paint odour – you are not being "over-exposed" to the vapours. Most persons who are over-exposed to paint vapours will generally not be able to smell the odour because of what is known as the "odour threshold limit".

NOTE: Many people commonly refer to paint as giving off fumes. Most paint smells are actually vapours, as fumes contain "suspended particles".

You Can help

the PAINTERS and YOURSELF

You can assist the painters in meeting your needs by:

1. Notifying the painters of any activities in advance that may leave an area vacant. (i.e. external training, etc.)
2. Notify the painters of any health or medical concerns that may require special accommodations on their part.
3. Limiting the number of staff and general public coming into the area, once the painting process has started. The more interruptions the longer it will take to finish.
4. Allowing unrestricted movement of the painters from one area to another. This will ensure the efficiency of the painting process meaning less time in the building.

Health Hazards of Paint

There are two main types of paint: LATEX (water base) and ENAMELS (oil base). Both of these types of paint contain solvents and/or volatiles. The amount of solvent by weight in paint will increase from flat latex (lowest) to high gloss enamels (highest), as a general rule. All paints have substances that will evaporate into the air, and may cause health problems based on the individual's exposure and their medical condition. High levels of exposure to paint vapours, as may be experienced by the painters, can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat. Also, if the exposure is repeated time after time, and for prolonged periods of time, there is a chance of getting dizzy or nauseated. Most building occupants do not experience this level of exposure unless they enter into the immediate area being painted (within 2 metres). Most individuals with asthma or other lung disorders should avoid any exposure to the paint vapours. However, with 4 weeks notice, individuals who have known medical conditions (ie asthma), should consult with their physician to determine what precautions can be taken to help prevent a reaction during the painting process.