

# Tips For A Sustainable Paint Project

We are informed time and time again that to be 'green' we MUST choose the lowest VOC or most environmentally friendly paint product.

But consider this; if that environmentally friendly paint must have additional coats to obtain the required finish or if it lasts for half the time than a slightly higher performing product, requiring it to be re-painted sooner. Is that really the 'green' option we believed it to be?

## Looking at the True Cost of Paint

To aim for increased sustainability on a paint project the true “cost” of paint, both in terms of price as well as VOC emissions, must be calculated over its complete ‘duty cycle’ and NOT just the cost associated with the initial product testing or first application.

In most cases using a higher performance paint can be more sustainable and economical than a lower performing and lower cost paint, because a lower quality paint system may require far more frequent repaints.

In addition to the price of the paint itself, you also need to consider the cost and impact of the labor to apply more often. Paint manufacturing is a global process and has a foot print far beyond the product itself. This includes the sourcing of raw materials, the manufacturing processes, packaging, transportation from the factory to the store, from the store to the job site, moving the work force to the job site, the tools used to apply and clean up the product.

## VOC's in Paint

If a solvent in paint is anything other than water, it is considered a Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) and can have an undesirable effect on both the environment and people.

The true environmental impact of paint can only be measured by the total VOCs emitted over the complete duty cycle of the paint. For example, high-performance paints with higher VOCs can have less environmental impact over time than lower performance paints with lower VOCs if one adds up the total VOCs released with every repaint required over the life of the structure.

## Specifying the best product

Specifying the correct product for its use is another way to ensure the sustainability of the coating. For example use:

1. a lower cost conventional paint product for ceilings / infrequently used areas
2. a high-performance products for walls in schools
3. a low VOC/Low Odor products for occupied buildings

choose specialty products for areas where chemicals are present

**GPS-1 and GPS-2** - MPI's two Green Performance™ Standards GPS-1 and GPS-2 require that all products meet or exceed the performance requirements of the applicable MPI product standard, while also meeting restrictions for chemical components and limits for maximum allowable VOCs.

**MPI X-Green** - Products that meet the qualifications for MPI's Extreme Green (X-Green) paint standard must have a maximum 50 g/l VOC; trace or zero quantities of various undesirable chemical components; performance/durability; and be emissions certified from an accredited lab to meet the stipulated indoor air quality requirements.

In summary; the product with the lowest VOC level may not be the 'green' option. Using a sustainable product that has low impact on the environment, yet maintains a certain level of performance, plus is suitable for the task at hand is a much 'greener' option.