

## Next up for recycling: paint

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Published 9:15 pm, Monday, June 24, 2013

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Starting July 1, Connecticut shoppers will be charged a 75-cent surcharge when they buy a gallon of paint, and in exchange, they will be able to drop off most unwanted household paint for recycling at participating paint retailers.

While customers won't get their deposit back as with the bottle bill, the surcharge is intended to cover the cost of safely recycling paint and paint cans.

It's all part of the state's efforts to reduce waste, increase recycling and help municipalities save money. It will also cut emissions of toxic paint fumes, called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), by 32 percent statewide, according to the state Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

This change is the result of Connecticut's extended producer responsibility (EPR) strategy. Under EPR, the financial obligation for disposal and recycling of products at the end of their lives shifts to consumers, so costs will be in proportion to how much paint an individual uses.

This practice benefits the environment and boosts the economy, said Scott Cassel, founder and chief executive officer, Product Stewardship Institute.

"You are bringing these materials to a better and higher use," Cassel said. "The economic impacts are very significant. These laws send a message to investors, particularly in recycling, that there will be an increased supply of a valuable natural resource." A number of studies show that recycling creates 10 times as many jobs as disposal."

The paint industry is just one of a growing list of industries that have accepted responsibility for their products at the end of their use. Connecticut has been recycling electronic waste for years, and Gov. Dannel P. Malloy signed the nation's first mattress recycling bill last month.

With paint cans being recycled, less waste will be burned in the state's trash-to-energy plants. Half the material dropped off at household hazardous waste collection days is leftover oil-based paint, so eliminating it will save municipalities at least \$700,000 annually, the DEEP predicts.

For consumers, this will allow them to drop off leftover cans of household paint at participating retailers, saving time and aggravation. (Stores are required to charge the fee at

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the point of purchase, but retailers' participation as a recycling drop-off point is voluntary.)

With 34 Sherwin-Williams stores in the state, including stores in Fairfield County, plans call for all stores to be collection sites, said Tom Kelly, Connecticut district manager.

At stores in states where the recycling law is already in effect, "it's very seamless," Kelly said. "I don't see any of this paint care stewardship as a negative for us." Sherwin-Williams stores will accept any brand of household latex or oil paint. "I want those customers. I want them to become our customers."

But the law could cut contractors' profits, because many will find it hard to pass the cost on to their clients, especially people in Fairfield County, who generally pay a flat fee for paint and labor combined, said Elliot Greenberg, vice president of sales and operations for Rings End, a home improvement retailer with 13 stores in Connecticut. Without understanding the reason for an added fee, these clients will balk at paying the recycling fee, he said.

PaintCare, a nonprofit created by the paint industry to manage the recycling program, has decided not to advertise the program heavily, to prevent a surge of people cleaning out their basements. So the paint contractor is faced with having to explain the law to his customer.

Rings End has worked to educate its paint contractor customers. "We put together fliers in Spanish, Portuguese, Polish, German," said Kevin Schilling, a Rings End senior paint purchasing manager.

Most homeowners keep leftover paint for lack of a viable option. An informal survey on the state DEEP's website shows that 91 percent of the 1,450 respondents had unwanted paint. Of those, 65 percent said they had at least five cans. DEEP estimates Connecticut homes hold some 5 million to 6 million cans of leftover paint.

Municipalities' household hazardous waste collections will start accepting latex paint and continue taking oil-based paint, but the tab will be paid by PaintCare, which will use the fees charged to consumers to manage paint recycling.

Connecticut was the third state in the nation to pass the paint recycling law, after Oregon and California. Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine and Minnesota have since passed similar legislation, and New York is expected to pass it next year.

"I would say it's a roadmap for how to deal with materials at the end of their life," said Tom Metzner, environmental analyst with the DEEP and a board member with the Boston-based Product Stewardship Institute. The paint manufacturers association worked with the Product Stewardship Institute for several years to help draft a law that other states could emulate.

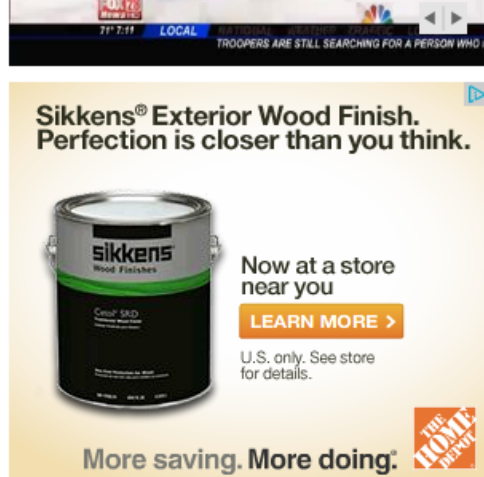
Connecticut has emerged as a leader in the producer responsibility movement, Cassel said. The "comprehensive" process is "inclusive," he said. "They have the support of the governor, the DEEP commissioner, local government, legislative support and many organizations in the state."

EPR aligns municipal and state interests and the political environment, Metzner said. "The (waste disposal) problem is a huge expense for municipalities. " We'll be saving a lot of oil-based and latex paint from going in the garbage," Metzner said. Recycling not only keeps hazardous materials from the waste stream; it creates a commodity that can be sold, he said.

The paint industry sees EPR as "inevitable," said Paul Fresina, operations and communications director for PaintCare.org. "All the products in the world are going to be managed at the end of their life. " The paint industry knows that paint is a big problem. Government agencies have been asking for help. We might as well get ahead of the curve."


Recycling fees vary by paint can size. For information on fees, paint recycling guidelines and paint drop-off locations: <http://www.paintcare.org/connecticut/index.php>

This story was reported under a partnership with the Connecticut Health I-Team ([www.c-hit.org](http://www.c-hit.org)).



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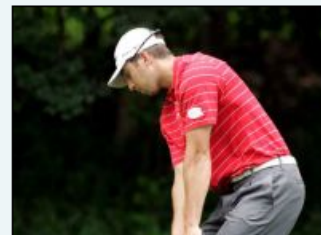
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