



CUSTOMERS

by Terri Pilcher

"I moved into an apartment that had just been painted, and it [nauseated me] to be in there," said Rachel Bleckman. "It took a lot of months for my headaches and dizziness to go away." She researched and found information on non-toxic paint. When her landlord wanted to repaint the walls, Rachel explained her problems with paint and the solution she'd found. "I told my landlord about it, and she was totally willing to do it."

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BREATHE

easy

Breathe Easy— Continued from page 56

Millions Hypersensitive to Paint

Many homeowners experience problems breathing in freshly painted rooms. A 2004 article in the *Archives of Environmental Health* stated that 11.2 percent of Americans, that's 32.5 million people, experience hypersensitivity to chemical products such as fresh paint and perfumes.

Companies Offering No-VOC and Odor-Free paints

AFM SafeCoat

www.afmsafecoat.com

Benjamin Moore & Co.

www.benjaminmoore.com

BioShield Paints

www.bioshieldpaint.com

Devoe Paint

www.devoe.com

Duron Paints & Wallcoverings

www.duron.com

Kelly Moore

www.kellymoore.com

Old Fashioned
Milk Paint Company

www.milkpaint.com

According to Ron Joseph of Ron Joseph & Associates, an independent consulting firm for the painting industry and expert paint witness, a few homeowners have died or been seriously injured from paint fumes, but "it's extremely rare," he said. "I know of 2 cases." The out-gassing of the paint, or release of solvent from the drying paint, causes the problems to hypersensitive individuals.

According to AFM SafeCoat, a manufacturer specializing in no-VOC products, "The distinctive smell of paint is dibutyl and diethyl phthalate and other chemical compounds that cause nausea,

dizziness, and severe headaches." As paint dries, these chemical compounds change to a gaseous form and enter the atmosphere.

Michelle Miller was struck down by her hypersensitivity to paint fumes, ending up in the hospital while renovating her home. Although she talks very little about what happened to her because she's currently in litigation, she did say that her susceptibility to fumes surprised her. "I was training for a triathlon, so I was pretty strong and healthy," she said. "I had believed that they wouldn't put products on the market unless they were tested and safe."

In response to her unexpected hypersensitivity, Miller began experimenting with non-VOC products in her rental properties and ended up creating protocols for renovations friendly to hypersensitive individuals, which she calls the Safer-Building How-To Guide.

Many people exposed to drying paint are affected by out-gassing, even when they don't realize it. "A

painter who used our protocols told me that he and his crew felt better using our recommended products than they'd ever felt after a day of work," said Miller. Many neurotoxins, chemicals that affect the nervous system, create a run-down feeling as the day wears on. Painters, who work hard for a living, may feel more run-down than other laborers because of their exposure to paint fumes.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, there are no VOC standards for paints used in non-industrial applications. In addition, Joseph, who has given courses on paintings and coatings

in most EPA regions, explained that VOC standards vary between states, so paints in California may differ from those in Kansas. Paints labeled "low-VOC" don't necessarily contain a truly low VOC level. The paint may merely off-gas less than other products or be a modified version of another formula.

Green Seal, an independent non-profit organization, provides low-VOC standards for paints. Green Seal regulations vary depending on the type of paint. Interior flat paints contain no more than 50 g/l of VOC; interior non-flat paints may have up to 150 g/l; exterior flat paints can contain up to 100 g/l; exterior non-flat paints may have up to 250 g/l. Well known brands such as Benjamin Moore, Olympic, and Dutch Boy carry products with this certification. Other companies, like Sherwin Williams, create their own designations for low-VOC paints.

Even these VOC standards may not be enough for some homeowners. With the many no-VOC paints now on the market, there's no reason not to use odor-free paints for chemically sensitive homeowners.

Improving Air Quality

For clients with little or no known sensitivity to low-VOC paints, increased ventilation is an adequate precaution. Chris Dankowski of Dankowski Painting specializes in interior residential repaints. He said, "A lot of the time, the house is occupied while we are working. This makes controlling the air quality a top priority. Fortunately, most interior acrylics are low-VOC and unobtrusive to begin with. We are also always sure to keep the house well ventilated, and we always bring a fan to the job site. We rarely get complaints about the air quality on a job site."

During the coldest days of winter and in cooler parts of the country, opening windows to increase ventilation may not be an option. Clients have asked Bill Pilcher Painting in Maryland to move interior paint jobs to March when the weather is warmer, because, they say, "We don't want to have the windows open in January."

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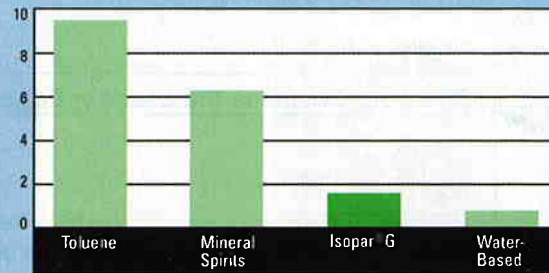
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The Air Change Index (ACI)



Air Change Index (ACI): the number of air changes per hour needed to be within the Occupational Exposure Limit (OEL). Lower than one means the volume of air in the room is enough to keep the solvent vapors below the OEL and does not need to be renewed. Above 1, the ACI value indicates the number of air renewals required to work safely with the paint without exceeding the acceptable limit. It's always good practice to ventilate.

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