



### **The Truth About VOC'S and Painting**

VOC's or Volatile Organic Compounds are emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids. VOC's include a wide variety of chemicals, some of which may have short and long term adverse health effects. Concentrations of many VOC's are consistently higher indoors (up to ten times higher) than outdoors. VOC's are emitted by a wide array of products numbering in the thousands. Examples include: paint and lacquers, paint strippers, cleaning supplies, pesticides, building materials and furnishings, office equipment such as copiers and printers, correction fluid and carbonless copy paper, graphics and craft materials including glues and adhesives, permanent markers, and photographic solutions.

Organic chemicals are widely used as ingredients in household products. Paints, varnishes, and wax all contain organic solvents, as do many cleaning, disinfecting, cosmetic, degreasing, and hobby products. Fuels are made up of organic chemicals. All of these products can release organic compounds while you are using them, and to some degree, when they are being stored.

Not so long ago it was common for paint fumes to drive people from their homes during the repainting process. Most conventional paints contained high levels of VOC's that produce a breathable gas when released. VOC's diminish air quality and may be detrimental to your health. Today alternative manufacturing techniques have allowed for the development of Low and No-VOC paints that release minimal VOC pollutants, and are virtually odor free.

Paints, adhesives, and other protective finishes are often formulated with solvents (or VOC's) to improve performance and durability. Additionally, paint cleanup often requires toxic solvents that release additional VOC pollutants. However, increased awareness of possible health risks and overall air quality concerns has led to a demand for products lower in VOC's. Manufacturers have therefore risen to the challenge by developing high-quality, latex-based coatings and adhesives for a wide variety of uses. Latex paints use water as their solvent and carrier, allowing easier cleanup and generally lower toxicity than oil-based paints. Today, latex products are equal or better in quality and durability than conventional oil-based formulas.

It should be noted that not all latex-based coatings are low in VOC's. VOC levels are usually expressed in grams per gallon. Interior paint is given a Green Seal if it has a VOC content of less than 50 grams for flat sheen and less than 150 grams for non-flat sheen. For persons who are particularly sensitive, or have strong concerns about air quality, most major manufactures now offer special Low or No-VOC paints that are odorless and virtually VOC free. I say virtually because the measurement to determine the volume of VOC's in a substance can only measure down to 5 grams.

As a responsible painting contractor and someone who is concerned about the environment, I choose to paint with Low and No-VOC paint systems manufactured by Benjamin Moore. Although paint is only one of many sources of VOC's, using Low or No-VOC materials is a way I can make a small difference.

***If we all strive to make small differences - it will make a big difference!***