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The Next STEP

Toward a Healthier Future

A Bi-monthly Newsletter of the Sebastopol Toxics Education Program

Local Toxics Disposal

■ **The next Sebastopol Toxics Collections Day is Tuesday August 9**, from 4 to 8pm. To make an appointment, call 707/795-2025 or 877/747-1870 at least 24 hours before the event. You can also drop items at the Household Toxics Facility.

■ **For more about local toxics disposal**, see *www.recyclenow.org* or call 707/565-3375.

Art Smart, Part II

Ah, the cheerful appeal of art supplies, standing ready to help us express and share such a wide range of feelings and perspectives.

But, unfortunately, there can be a dark side to these products so commonly found in our homes, schools, and workplaces. Yes, hiding within our paints, glues, glazes, sprays, powders, markers (and their cleanup materials), there can be harmful heavy metals, parabens, solvents, phthalates, formaldehyde, and more. These in turn can cause headaches, nausea, breathing problems, cancer, lung and kidney damage — plus harm to precious animals and ecosystems.

In our prior article (aka Part I), we discussed how to protect yourself and others (including children) by evaluating products, choosing safer options, and following best practices. (Read more at *www.healthyworld.org/GRAPHICS/STEP/stepvol16no2.pdf*.)

In this article, we'll explore proper cleanup and disposal. There are lots of specifics for various products, but here are some key fundamentals.

Prepare for product risks

1) Read the label on *each product,* because the warnings can vary. For instance, different paint colors can have different pigments with different levels of hazard.

2) Check that each product follows the current labeling standards. In the U.S., that's noted on the label with the phrase "Conforms to ASTM D-4236." Without it, the product could have unlabeled risks.

3) Consider and take seriously any hazard and usage statements. The words "Danger," "Caution," "Warning," and "Poison" indicate specific levels of risk. Also, if it says "Not intended for use by children," or has a Prop. 65 warning, that reflects harmful materials inside.

4) Get quick guidance from the (optional) ACMI certification logos. The AP, CP, and "non-toxic" seals mean that ACMI assesses the product as low in toxicity when used as directed. In contrast, its CL or "Cautions required" labels mean that there are harmful ingredients. Avoid the latter, or at least be sure it's worth the risk.

(Read more about evaluating products, including the debates about ACMI certification, in Part I.)

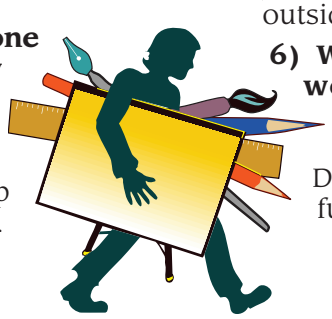
5) If you're using any hazardous materials, prepare for your work by gathering the appropriate protection equipment and cleanup supplies. Also learn how to handle any spills or exposures that might occur.

6) Keep the U.S. poison control number handy, 800/222-1222. The staff there has specific training in addressing toxic exposures.

Cleanup carefully

1) Follow any cleanup instructions on the package label. Clean spills immediately.

2) When you're done working, securely close containers — to preserve your product, prevent spills, and keep toxics out of the air.



3) When cleaning your brushes, palettes, etc., be sure to keep oil and acrylic paints (and their solvents) out of the drain. This also applies to watercolor paints that have hazard warnings. Instead, wash brushes in a closable container of solvent or water, then store that for later reuse or toxic disposal. See the box (over) for an easy process for doing this.

4) If any of your art materials have hazard warnings, collect the rags or paper towels you used with them in an airtight container for disposal as toxics. Even if they're dried, don't put them in the trash; the toxics can go from there into our environment, water supply, and food chain. Label the container, for instance with "Hazardous waste. Waste rags with paint pigments." Keep containers closed unless adding to them.

5) Give special care to rags that contain oil paints or solvents. These can spontaneously combust just by being tossed in a corner and exposed to air. They also shouldn't go in the trash. Instead, put them in a metal, flame-proof container (such as Justrite's Oily Rag Safety Can). Don't use a plastic container, as solvents can dissolve plastic. Another approach is to soak them in a labeled jar of water, then put that securely outside, pending toxic disposal.

6) Wash hands and surfaces well. If you've used products with hazard labels, wet mop or HEPA vacuum your work area. Don't sweep, because that risks further exposure and dispersal.

*See **Art**, over*

Toxics Endangering

For the first time, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has analyzed the effects of three common pesticides on endangered and threatened species, plus designated critical habitat, nationwide.

The resulting study finds that two of these pesticides (malathion and chlorpyrifos) harm an astounding 97% of the 1,782 animals and plants protected under the Endangered Species Act. The third, diazinon, harms 79%. The EPA concludes that these chemicals are "likely to adversely affect" these species.

These three (organophosphate) pesticides are already well-known for causing neurological and reproductive harm. They're used in farms, golf courses, greenhouses, public lands, government eradication programs, and a few household products. They can be absorbed through our lungs and skin, or by consuming them in our water or food.

The Center for Biological Diversity says, "These dangerous pesticides have been used without proper analysis for decades." It calls on the EPA to use this information to better protect plants, animals, and people — and to do this same evaluation for all hazardous pesticides.

So what can we do? Avoid products with these ingredients, eat organic, and support groups acting to reduce our shared toxic exposure.

SOURCES: www.ecowatch.com/2016/04/09/endangered-species-threatened-pesticides • www.npic.orst.edu • www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organophosphate_poisoning

ABOUT STEP

The Next STEP (TNS) is published six times a year by the **Sebastopol Toxics Education Program** (STEP). **STEP is a project of the City of Sebastopol**, implemented by local citizen volunteers. **STEP's mission** is to support city residents in reducing their toxic use and exposure, creating a healthier and safer Sebastopol for everyone.

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***Art**, continued*

Discard safely

1) Keep products in their original packaging. This lets other folks see the proper care instructions. (Or at least copy the key safety information onto the new container.)

2) If you have unwanted usable supplies, consider donating them, say to a local school, or post them on Freecycle, craigslist, or EBay. Or search online for "Sonoma County donate art supplies."

3) If you have an unwanted oil or acrylic canvas painting, consider creating a new painting over it. Or donate it for reuse. Otherwise, remove it from its frame before toxics disposal.

4) Follow any disposal instructions on the labels.

5) Discard all products with hazard labels through the Sonoma County Waste Management Agency toxic disposal system. Options include the Household Hazardous Waste Facility and Community Toxics Collection Days. Even if you're not sure if an art product requires this handling, it's OK to bring it in. See *www.recyclenow.org* or call 707/565-3375 for more information.

6) Also discard as toxic anything that contains toxic art materials, including used rags, paint tubes, and waste rinsate.

7) Educate yourself more about the recommended safe practices with your particular products. You can also make cleanup simpler by skipping the toxic options at purchase time!

Developing Your Paint Solvent Reuse System

Artists using oil paints can save money, reduce toxic waste, and get full use of their solvents by setting up a simple solvent re-use system. Here's how to do that. (Be sure to work in a well-ventilated space.)

1) Get two clean glass containers with lids. It's important to use glass, so solvents won't leak or interact with it. However, if you're concerned about breakage, you can put those jars inside metal containers.

2) Clearly label the jars. For instance, you could write, "Hazardous waste. Includes paint pigments." Add the solvent name and any warnings from the label about toxicity, flammability, corrosivity, etc.

3) Pour your solvent into one of the jars. **Then, the next time you paint, clean your brushes in it,** and let it sit overnight.

4) The next day, when the pigment has settled to the bottom of the jar, pour off the solvent into the second jar. Use that jar for your next brush cleaning.

5) Pour the pigment sludge from the first jar into a third container. You can just gather it there. Or you can recover the paint for use. Some artists like its gray tone, apply it as a base paint, and love avoiding the waste. (See a YouTube demonstration at *http://bit.ly/1Su0754.)*

6) Otherwise, periodically dispose of this sludge paint at a toxics facility, not in the trash.

7) When the solvent is too saturated to effectively clean brushes, pour it and any paint pigment into a labeled disposal container. This container should be appropriate for flammable liquids (i.e., a fire safety can) and remain tightly closed except when adding material.

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Artists who use acrylic paints, or watercolors with any hazard warnings, can use a similar system with water rinsate. Look online for technique options, including for speeding up the separation.

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For more paint disposal specifics, see *www.mtcubacenter.org/images/PDFs-and-SWFs/Individual_Artist_D7354_bpqg9053.pdf.*

For more about reducing toxic use in oil painting, see *www.gamblincolors.com/studio.safety*.

SOURCE: "12 Ways Artists Can 'Go Greener,'" by Diana Moses Botkin, www.dickblick.com/12-ways-artists-can-go-greener