



THE ORIGINAL GREEN
SEAL OF APPROVAL
SINCE 1989

GS-11 Green Seal Environmental Leadership Standard for Paint

AN OVERVIEW

Why the standard was created

Paint is one of the biggest contributors to indoor air pollution due to volatile organic compounds (VOCs), chemicals that can have short- and long-term health effects. The EPA reports that concentrations of many VOCs can be up to ten times higher than outdoors. GS-11, Green Seal's paint standard was published in 1993. This standard along with GC-3, our criteria for Anti-Corrosive Paint was published in 1997, worked to reduce the health and environmental impacts of these categories of paints. With the availability of new technology, Green Seal has updated its environmental standards for paint and combined them into a new GS-11, creating a groundbreaking set of guidelines for paint manufacturers.

The scope of GS-11

This standard applies to paints and coatings - including wall, anti-corrosive, and reflective coatings, floor paints, primers and undercoats.

Key Areas of Standard

The new standard works harder to protect indoor air quality by increasing the number of prohibited chemicals, reducing allowable VOC levels for base paint and colorants, requiring a more accurate test to measure VOCs and including expanded consumer education criteria.

Environmental Criteria

The first edition of GS-11 prohibited 25 chemicals such as toluene, benzene and formaldehyde. But with the rapid growth of formulation technology, Green Seal wanted to expand this list to eliminate the possibility that a chemical could be used that was as harmful or potentially worse than the 25 chemicals on the list. By including a more comprehensive list of prohibited chemicals the standard removes these loopholes and ensures paint formulas are safer. Hazardous air pollutants and ozone-depleting compounds are prohibited, as are carcinogens, mutagens and reproductive toxins.

ENVIRONMENTAL
LEADERSHIP STANDARDS



CERTIFICATION FOR
PRODUCTS, SERVICES,
PROPERTIES & COMPANIES



PARTNERSHIPS IN
GREEN PURCHASING AND
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT



SUSTAINABILITY
RESEARCH & LIFE CYCLE
ANALYSIS



Key Areas of GS-11 Continued

Low- or zero-VOC paints have experienced increased sales, but many shoppers are not aware that they can increase the VOC levels by adding colorants to the base paint. For most paints the darker the tint, the higher the VOC of the final blend. By adjusting the levels of VOCs allowed in base paint and including criteria for colorants, the new standard ensures that even a heavily tinted paint will still contain minimum VOCs.

Measurement of volatile organic compounds has historically been an imprecise process. The lower the VOC level, the more difficult it has been to get an accurate measure. Green Seal has incorporated a more direct method into the standard that produces a more accurate reading as the amount gets smaller. The test is estimated to be 10 times more effective and improves further as the VOC gets closer to zero.

Packaging Criteria

The package must contain at least 20% recovered material, and may not contain heavy metals or phthalates.

Labeling Criteria

Green Seal considers the life cycle of a product when developing standards. The use and disposal of a product is an important aspect of this cycle and efforts have been made to “close the loop” on paint. Under the new standard manufacturers are required to include instructions on the label for proper disposal or, preferably, reuse or recycling of leftover paint. Users must be advised in source reduction (buying just what is needed), proper use to reduce waste, and proper ventilation.

Pre-consumer waste and leftover paint should be collected and donated, as markets for recycled paint continue to grow. Any paint that is kept out of the waste stream helps protect the environment and reduces the raw materials required to make new paint.

Green Seal is happy to offer this new standard to paint manufacturers as a way to identify themselves as leaders in the industry. As consumers continue to demand safer, more sustainable products, this new standard provides a guideline to meet that demand.



This is only a summary of the standard. The full standard is available at:
http://www.greenseal.org/certification/standards/paints_and_coatings.pdf

For more information visit: www.greenseal.org,
call: 202.872.6400 or email: greenseal@greenseal.org