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# eco LOCAL *Living*



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# The Green Designer

By Sophie Castro & Karen Totino

## Eco-Friendly Paint for a HEALTHY HOME



Winter is a time when we feel like making our homes more festive, more vibrant and welcoming. Often all that is needed is a fresh coat of paint – but what about the smell, especially in the winter when it is harder to open the windows?

That paint smell is actually a concern, and not only in the winter season. Most paints available on the market are not so health-friendly and it is important to know what you're getting. Essentially, what is unhealthy and creates that 'new paint smell' are the volatile organic compounds (VOC's). While a number of paints claim to have no VOC's, the Federal VOC limits are set at 250 grams per liter (g/l) for flat paints and 380 g/l for others – so there is still quite a large amount of toxicity in those products.\*

VOCs are solvents that get released in the highest concentrations during paint application, and most paint will continue to emit odorless and harmful fumes for years afterwards. They can cause acute symptoms, including headaches and dizziness. The long-term effects are less obvious, but according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), some VOCs are suspected carcinogens. The EPA has discovered through studying indoor air quality that concentration of air pollutants, such as VOC's, are 10 times higher indoors than outdoors.

There is one company that has been dedicated to the manufacture of a truly 'green' paint. It is called Mythic. A subsidiary of Southern Diversified Products (SDP), it associated with the University of Southern Mississippi and, in 2007, after more than 6 years of intensive polymer research, launched a new paint – it is quite revolutionary as the production process detoxifies the latex paint at its core, as opposed to removing toxins from the paint at a later stage – the usual method practiced by

other 'green paint' manufacturers. Mythic guarantees that this process gives their paint a high and reliable performance. The result is a zero VOC and zero carcinogen product "Safe for People, Safe for Pets, Safe for the Earth", as their logo claims. It does not have the 'new paint' smell, is stain resistant and easy to clean.

There are 1,232 colors available in all sheens for interior and exterior use, as well as ceiling paint and primers. The colorants added to their base are also non-toxic, unlike typical paints which VOC's levels will commonly increase as the added tints also contains VOC's.

It is important to be aware that the effect of toxic agents from paints is especially dangerous when the space remains occupied during remodeling or repainting—and especially if there are children. In scenarios such as pregnancy, newborn bedrooms, pet spaces and birdcages, the non-toxic aspect of Mythic makes it a very appropriate paint option.

Consider this as food for thoughts, so that when you shop for paint you can be a bit more critical and look more deeply into what the product is made of. No matter what paint you will end up selecting, do enjoy your new walls! And do make a point to bring in fresh air into your home as you do your renovations to minimize indoor pollution.\* The United States Green Building Council's LEED for Homes program requires 150 gal/l VOC limit for non-flats and 50 gal/l VOC limit for flats.

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Karen Totino & Sophie Castro own Green Conscience Home & Garden, 33 Church St, in Saratoga Springs. Green Conscience is the local Mythic Paint dealer and a retail showroom that offers a variety of organic, eco-friendly lawn, garden and home improvement products. Call 306-5196 or email: [Karen@green-conscience.com](mailto:Karen@green-conscience.com).

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