



Safety News

Making California Workplaces Safer

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Spray with Safety in Mind

Applying paint and spray coatings to the interior and exterior of buildings and structures is a hard job and can expose you to a variety of chemical and ergonomic hazards. This type of work can also place physical strain on the body. According to [The Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), painters have a higher rate of injuries and illnesses than the national average. The common risks include falls from ladders, muscle strains from lifting, and exposure to irritants such as drywall dust.

This type of work may typically require work on elevated surfaces, such as on the tops of ladders or scaffolding. Before working on any ladder or scaffold, make sure that you:

- Inspect the ladders or scaffolding daily before starting work
- Correctly position the ladder, adjust the ladder to a proper angle, and make sure the ladder is on stable, level footing
- Make sure that you have to right ladder to do the job safely
- If the job requires you to wear fall protection, make sure you are wearing the proper fall protective gear and that you know how to use it
- Never use improvised, makeshift ladders, or scaffolds because they could collapse or fall and injure you or your co-workers



It is also important to remember that a qualified person must install and inspect scaffolding prior to use.¹

When mixing or working with paints or primers always read the safety data sheet (SDS) to become familiar on the chemical makeup. Even though certain material may be water-based or labeled a "green" product, it can still contain hazardous ingredients. Good ventilation protects you from paint fumes. Spray booths, fans, open doors, and open windows can also move fresh air into your workspace.

Use personal protective equipment such as respirators, eye protection, hoods, gloves, and Tyvek suits to help protect your body from paint and fumes. Make sure to use:

- Goggles or safety glasses to protect your eyes from paint splashes during application and paint or primer mixing
- Gloves and coveralls to protect your skin
- A respirator to protect yourself from dusts, air borne spray paint droplets, and the fumes from solvents and paints

Dust, asbestos, mold, and lead are hazardous exposures that can be present when you are sanding or cleaning surfaces prior to painting. Know what you are sanding or cleaning before starting the job. Ask a supervisor or foreman for help if you are unclear about how to do a job safely or have questions about the materials you are working on. Always practice good hygiene by washing your hands, face, and arms during and after a job. Keep your work clothes and shoes separate from your family in order to prevent cross-contamination at home.

Choose the correct tools for your job task and use tools with handles long enough to prevent you from over-reaching or straining your back.

"According to The Bureau of Labor Statistics, painters have a higher rate of injuries and illnesses than the national average."

Tool handles should be soft, have a non-slip surface, and comfortably fit your hand. Try out different models until you find one with a comfortable fit.

Sanding and painting involves repetitive movements and requires you to work in awkward positions. To prevent strain injuries:

- Rotate your job tasks throughout the day and take rest breaks to prevent fatigue
- Use proper lifting techniques to protect your back and ask for help lifting heavier things
- Wear comfortable leather work boots with non-slip soles that will give your feet and ankles good support

If you are working outdoors, your body will be exposed to the elements and may be affected by the heat or the cold. When working, dress in light layers that will protect you from the sun and the cold.

Always practice good housekeeping on the jobsite to prevent slips, trips, and falls. It is best to try to work with a partner or co-worker, so that they can help if you need it. If you do have to work alone, make sure someone knows where you are at all times and keep a two-way radio or a cell phone within reach.

The job of a painter is challenging and can be a very physical job. Remember, safe working practices are up to you and are important to help you maintain your health and fitness. Nothing is better than going home at the end of the day knowing that you did a good job and that you completed your work safely.

¹Cal/OSHA defines such a person as one who has been **designated** by the employer to have demonstrated the ability to perform safely all assigned duties and who, when required, is properly licensed in accordance with federal, state, or local laws and regulations.

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