

How-to

# How to Dispose of Spray Paint and Other Aerosol Cans

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**According to Recycling International**, the United States produces 3.5 billion aerosol cans every year. But not everyone that uses them knows how to dispose of aerosol cans. Since most of these cans are steel or aluminum, they are recyclable. However, only 30 percent of these cans ever make it to the recycling pile.

To make matters worse, due to the volatile propellants used to pressurize their contents, most aerosol cans are considered hazardous waste by the EPA. The product in the aerosol can (i.e., brake cleaning fluids, paints, sealants, cleaning solvents, etc.) could also be hazardous and exhibit properties such as ignitability, corrosivity, reactivity and toxicity.

A single aerosol can may seem like an innocent item. What harm could an aerosol can do? How much impact could one more aerosol can have in a landfill site? The problem is, it's not just one can. **Throwing aerosol cans into the trash** is bad for the environment. This improper aerosol can waste disposal is also non-compliant and unsafe.

## Spray Can Disposal – The Risk of Flammables

Even when a can seems empty, there is some residual product and propellant remaining, which has the potential to ignite. Unless aerosol cans are completely emptied in a safe manner, they pose a risk for recycling or landfill workers. In fact, you should never dispose of aerosol cans in the trash for this very reason. **A prominent recycling company experienced a fire at their facility** caused by an aerosol spray can.

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Disposing of hazardous waste is expensive and requires adherence to strict protocols. But what if you could save money by emptying and recycling aerosol cans? The EPA encourages safe aerosol can waste disposal through the **Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA)**. According to the Act, punctured and emptied aerosol cans no longer count as hazardous waste.

## How to Dispose of Spray Paint and Other Aerosol Cans Using Aerosolv®

Stay compliant and safe with an **Aerosolv® aerosol recycling system**. Installation is easy on a standard 55-gallon drum. Thread the Aerosolv unit into the 2-inch bung and the filter directly to the ¾-inch bung. Screw the puncturing device into the bung opening. Be sure to use anti-static wires to ground the unit so static electricity doesn't build up.

Spray can disposal is easy to accomplish. To empty aerosol cans, insert can, nozzle end down, into the housing sleeve. Lower the top plate and tighten the lock knob. Push the handle completely down and hold into place. A steel pin punctures the can, allowing propellant and residual liquid product to drain into the 55-gallon drum. Wait at least 20 seconds to ensure all product drains. Now considered "RCRA-empty," the processed aerosol can is ready for recycling.

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## Purchase an Aerosolv Can Disposal System Today

Stay compliant and save money by adding an Aerosolv aerosol can recycling system to your business today. *Different models are available* to match the amount of waste generated.

*Previously Featured on Justrite's Workplace Safety Articles and News.*

### References:

- EHS Daily Advisor. *Managing Aerosol Cans: Disposal*
- Recycling International. *What is the future for aerosol cans in America?*
- ABC 6. *Rumpke Recycling issues a major warning after two fires in 24 hours*

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