

Storage & Shelf Life of paints

Storage of flammable liquids

The storage of solvent paints is covered by legislation in the United Kingdom. Users should familiarise themselves with the HSE guidance note “The storage of flammable liquids in containers” ISBN 0-11-885533-6.

The storage in workrooms of flammable paints, with a flash point below 32°C, should be restricted to a maximum of 50 litres and products should be contained, when not in use, in a suitable storage cabinet.

Storerooms for solvent based products should be fitted with flameproof electrical equipment, be sited away from all sources of combustion and be well ventilated to prevent the build up of flammable vapours.

Storage temperature of paints

The drying and storage properties of paints are impaired by low temperatures. Store above freezing point if possible.

All water based paints must be protected from frost in storage. If damaged by frost, then emulsions can become unstable and the solids separate out. Damaged products are unsuitable for use even after warming. Ideally, products should be stored between 5 and 20°C.

Pigment settling

The suspension of pigments and extenders in paints can deteriorate over a period of time. Settling and a failure to correctly stir the paint prior to its use is one of the most common causes of complaint. Poor stirring leads to lack of opacity, colour variation, inconsistent viscosity and drying problems. Stirring should be carried out with a suitable implement such as a pallet knife. Mixing paint with steel rods is not satisfactory. Following stirring, check that the paint is well mixed with a consistent shade and no settlements left on the bottom of the container.

Thixotropic paints, identified by a paste like structure which breaks down under shear, are less prone to settling and vigorous stirring may reduce the viscosity of the paint and lead to runs/drips. Follow the instructions on the can label as applicable.

Shelf life of paints

Firwood Paints recommend that products are used within the following periods after supply:

All paints	2 years (except the following)
Water borne coatings	12 months
Etch primers	2 years
Two pack products:	
base	18 months
curing agent	6 months
Coal tar epoxies	12 months
Zinc rich epoxies	2 years

Products can of course be used after the shelf life has expired but should first be checked to ensure that they have not deteriorated in quality. Customers are reminded that if products are stored in adverse conditions, the shelf life can be reduced. All paints should be checked for settlement and thoroughly stirred, if necessary, prior to use.