



THE ORIGINAL GREEN  
SEAL OF APPROVAL  
SINCE 1989

# GS-11

## Green Seal™ Standard for Paints, Coatings, Stains, and Sealers

### ***A Guide for Leadership in Architectural Coatings***

Coatings are significant contributors to indoor air pollution and harmful ground-level ozone. Many of these products contain volatile organic compounds (VOCs), chemicals that can have short- and long-term health effects, and contribute to the ozone problem. The California Air Resources Board has established limits on the VOC contents of paints and other coatings. In addition, many other chemicals found in these products may be toxic, and users risk exposure to harmful chemicals through inhalation and exposure to skin.

The 2015 edition of GS-11 combines previous editions of the GS-11 Standard for Paints and Coatings and the GS-47 Standard for Stains and Finishes, and includes several additional product categories. Now most varieties of architectural coatings can be Green Seal-certified.

#### ***Scope of GS-11***

This standard covers architectural paints and coatings that are applied on-site to indoor and outdoor surfaces, and stains and finishes that are intended and labeled for use on wood and metal surfaces. These products may be opaque or transparent, film-forming or penetrating.

Products covered include:

- Paints (interior & exterior)
- Anti-corrosive coatings
- Floor coatings
- Primers or undercoats
- Reflective wall coatings (elastomeric & non-elastomeric)
- Reflective roof coatings
- Clear brushing lacquers
- Conjugated oil varnishes
- Finishes
- Lacquers
- Low-solids coatings
- Sealers
- Shellacs
- Stains
- Varnishes
- Hygienic wall coatings
- Decorative wall coatings
- Impact resistant wall coatings
- Concrete/masonry sealers
- Fire resistive coatings

#### ***Key Areas Addressed***

GS-11 establishes performance criteria for products, and helps protect air quality, health, and the environment by prohibiting harmful chemicals, limiting VOC content for base paint and colorants, and requiring consumer education measures regarding proper use, recycling, and disposal.

#### ***Performance Requirements***

GS-11 ensures that certified paints, coatings, stains, and sealers deliver satisfactory value in terms of performance. Applicants must test their products for the key performance parameters for the intended use of each product. These test methods must be rigorous and scientifically validated.

#### ***Health and Environmental Requirements***

Recognizing the rapid advances in formulation technology, GS-11 promotes the creation of safer coatings by prohibiting a comprehensive list of harmful chemicals, including heavy metals, certain phthalates, triclosan, formaldehyde donors, carcinogens, mutagens, reproductive toxins, hazardous air pollutants, and ozone depleting compounds. Certain exceptions are made for titanium dioxide, carbon black, crystalline silica, and PCBTF because of their necessity for acceptable performance and the current lack of feasible alternatives.

SUSTAINABILITY  
LEADERSHIP STANDARDS



INDEPENDENT  
THIRD-PARTY  
CERTIFICATION



SUSTAINABILITY  
RESEARCH &  
LIFE CYCLE ANALYSIS



TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
FOR INSTITUTIONAL  
GREENING



### **VOC Limitations**

Low- or zero-VOC paints have experienced increased sales, but many shoppers may not be aware that VOC levels can increase when colorants are added to the base paint. For most paints the darker the tint, the higher the VOC of the final blend. GS-11 sets limits on the amounts of VOC in both base paint and colorants, thereby ensuring that even a heavily tinted paint will still contain a low level of VOCs. GS-11 also sets limits on the VOC contents for each class of product, ensuring that they meet the VOC requirements of the California Air Quality regulators.

### **Packaging Requirements**

The package must contain at least 20% recovered material or be recycled as part of a manufacturer take-back program. It may not contain harmful compounds, such as heavy metals, certain phthalates, bisphenol A, or chlorinated compounds. Aerosol cans are prohibited.

### **Labeling Requirements**

Green Seal standards are based on a scientific evaluation of the entire life cycle of a product. The use and disposal of a product are important aspects of this cycle. Users must be advised on appropriate purchasing (buying only what is needed), proper use to reduce waste, and proper ventilation. The label must encourage consultation with local authorities about proper disposal or recycling opportunities for empty packaging and leftover product, and inform about any “take back” programs.

Green Seal offers this standard as a way for coatings manufacturers to identify their products as leaders in the industry. As consumers and purchasers continue to demand safer, environmentally preferable products, certification to GS-11 makes it easy to identify those paints, coatings, stains, and sealers that meet the highest levels of sustainability.

***This is only a summary of the standard.***

***The full standard is available at: [www.greenseal.org/GS11](http://www.greenseal.org/GS11)***

For more information visit: [www.greenseal.org](http://www.greenseal.org), call: (202) 872-6400, or email: [greenseal@greenseal.org](mailto:greenseal@greenseal.org).

*Green Seal is an independent, non-profit organization dedicated to safeguarding the environment and transforming the marketplace by promoting the manufacture, purchase, and use of environmentally responsible products and services. Founded in 1989, Green Seal provides life-cycle, science-based environmental certification standards that are credible, transparent, and essential to creating a more sustainable world.*

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