

Washington’s PaintCare Fee to Increase in 2026

Updated — July 2025



PaintCare submitted to the Washington State Department of Ecology a proposed increase of the PaintCare fee assessed on sales of architectural coatings in Washington. The increase was approved by the Washington Department of Ecology in July 2025 and will take effect on January 1, 2026.

Background

Since starting in 2021, the Washington PaintCare program has processed more than 3.5 million gallons of leftover paint for recycling or safe disposal. During this time, paint collection volumes have been consistently high, while paint management costs have increased and revenue has slowed, resulting in the need for a fee increase in Washington to ensure the program can be sustained into the future.

Fee Schedule

Following is the new fee schedule for the Washington paint stewardship program:

Container Size	Current Fee	Effective Jan. 1, 2026
Half pint or smaller	\$0.00	\$0.00
Larger than half pint up to smaller than 1 gallon	\$0.45	\$0.65
1–2 gallons	\$0.95	\$1.45
Larger than 2 gallons up to 5 gallons	\$1.95	\$2.75

Notify Painting Contractors

It is important for professional painting contractors to be aware of the fee increase as soon as possible. They may provide job quotes months before the increase takes effect and should include the new fee structure in their bids for projects beginning January 1, 2026.

Inform Your Customers

To help inform your customers about the increase in the PaintCare fee, PaintCare has developed leaflets that can be handed out at the paint counter, added to painting contractor invoices, or provided at checkout. Please provide these free informational materials to your customers and mention the fee increase in your customer communications, such as emails and newsletters.

PaintCare also makes available an in-store poster that presents information about the fee. Posters can be displayed in the paint aisle or near the paint counter or checkout.

Order Fee Change Leaflets or Posters

You can order additional leaflets or in-store posters for free at any time by calling PaintCare at (855) PAINT09 or sending an e-mail to [info@paint.org](mailto:info@paint.org). Please be sure to include: 1) a contact name, 2) business name, 3) mailing address, and 4) quantity of leaflets and/or posters desired. Electronic copies are also available for download and printing from PaintCare’s website at [www.paintcare.org/retailers/](http://www.paintcare.org/retailers/).

Preparing for the Increase

Before the new fee takes effect on January 1, 2026, retailers are advised to prepare their point-of-sale and billing systems to show the new fee. Retailers should also be prepared to see the increased fee on invoices from their paint suppliers once they take effect.

Retailers should apply the new fee to any paint sold starting January 1, 2026. If you have inventory in stock on which you paid the old (lower) fee that is in effect until December 31, 2025, and sell the product after the fee changes to the new (higher) fee, you can keep the difference between the old and new PaintCare fee.

Updated Materials about the PaintCare Program

Before the new fee takes effect, PaintCare will mail updated program brochures, program posters, contractor fact sheets, and other point-of-sale (POS) materials to paint retailers that reflect the new fee structure. In the meantime, retailers and other organizations may continue distributing or using any materials that they currently have.

## **COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PAINTCARE FEE**

### **How is the fee calculated?**

When a new program starts, the fee is set to cover the cost of a fully operating program. PaintCare estimates the annual sales of architectural paint in each state and divides the estimated annual expenses of the program by the estimated number of containers to be sold, adjusts for container size, and determines a fee per container size that will provide the revenue needed to fund the program.

PaintCare is a nonprofit organization and operates programs on a state-by-state basis, so the fee may increase or decrease and is different from state to state.

### **Is the fee a deposit to be returned to customers?**

**The fee is not a deposit.** The fee is used entirely to cover the expenses of running the program. The fee is not a refundable deposit for the return of paint or empty paint cans, which are not accepted by the PaintCare program.

### **Is sales tax applied to the fee, itself?**

Yes. The fee is part of the purchase price; therefore, sales tax is collected on the fee. The fee itself is not a tax.

### **Are we required to show the fee on receipts?**

Showing the fee on receipts is not required, but most retail stores in states with a PaintCare program list the fee in order to explain the price increase to their customers. PaintCare encourages retailers to display the fee to increase awareness of the program.

### **Do we refund the fee if a product is returned?**

Yes, the fee should be refunded because it is part of the purchase price.

### **How does the public know about the fee?**

PaintCare provides materials for retailers to distribute to the public to help explain the purpose of the fee, how the program works, and how to find a paint drop-off site. Translated materials are available in Spanish and over two dozen other languages. Translated materials are provided upon request. Additional materials can be ordered as needed for no charge. In addition to retailers, PaintCare works with professional associations to inform professional painting contractors and others about the program. PaintCare also conducts general outreach campaigns that may include digital and online advertising, newspaper, radio, and television.

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