



Build It Back Green

Select Low- or Zero-VOC Paints & Carpets

BENEFITS

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the **levels of air pollutants inside the home may be 2 to 5 times higher than the levels outdoor**. Considering the fact that most people spend up to 90% of their time indoors, indoor air quality is something that everyone should be concerned about.

Indoor pollution sources that release gases, known as volatile organic compounds (VOCs), into the air are the primary cause of indoor air quality problems in homes. Some health effects that can be felt from indoor air pollutants include eye, nose, and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness, and tiredness.

Common sources of VOCs in the home include building materials such as paints, wood finishes, and carpets.



You can reduce your exposure to VOCs in the home by getting rid of the products that have high levels of VOC and substituting new products that contain low or no VOCs.

DESCRIPTION & CHARACTERISTICS

There are several logos that may be on the labels of paints, wood finishes, and carpets to identify them as low or no VOC products.



The Green Seal logo may be found on products that have been tested to emit **low levels of VOCs**.

Paints and wood finishes that have been tested by Green Seal would have this logo displayed on their label.

Products & Practices Sheets



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Green Guard is another logo that may be found on paints.

Paints that have been tested and certified for **zero levels of VOCs** would have the Green Guard logo displayed on their label.



The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Green Label and Green Label Plus logos identify carpets and carpet padding and adhesives that emit **low levels of VOCs**.

If your budget allows it, paints and finishes made from natural products such as water, plant oils, natural latex, milk casein, and beeswax are the least toxic and safest for your health and the environment. Also, there are carpets and rugs made from natural products such as wool, jute, and seagrass that do not “off-gas” like standard carpets.

INSTALLATION & PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT TIPS

- When using low- or zero-VOC paints and wood finishes, be sure to have adequate ventilation.
- When installing wall-to-wall carpeting, use the tack down method instead of the glue down one. The tack down method does not require chemicals or destroy the floor surface.
- You can improve indoor air quality by not allowing smoking in your house; using exhaust fans when cooking and showering; using natural and organic cleaning products; and keeping houseplants in your home that have been found to help purify indoor air such as English Ivy, Philodendron, Peace Lily, and Pothos.

PRODUCT TYPES & PRICES

- The estimated cost of low- or zero- VOC paint can range from \$25 to \$38 per gallon. The estimated cost of painting the interior of a typical 1200 square foot shotgun house with low- or zero- VOC paint can range from \$700 to \$1200.
- The estimated cost of low-VOC carpet can range from \$2 to \$5 per square foot. The estimated cost of installing low-VOC carpet in a typical 1200 square foot shotgun house can range from \$900 to \$2250.
- Some low- or zero-VOC paints, wood finishes, and carpets may be purchased at Home Depot. Other local suppliers are identified on the **Vendors List** available on our website at globalgreen.org/bibg and in the **New Orleans Green Building Resource Center** at 841 Carondelet Street.