

# Paint Mixing Operations - Property

Paint related operations are undertaken in many trades and businesses. However, the mixing of flammable liquids presents a number of risks that require careful management.

This Loss Prevention Standard describes the main risks associated with paint mixing and provides guidance on reducing the potential for loss or damage.

# Paint Mixing Operations - Property

## Introduction

Paint related processes are undertaken by a wide range of different trades. Typically, the paints, and other finishes, will be stored and mixed at the premises, with any flammable agents creating fire and explosion risks.

This Loss Prevention Standard provides an overview of the main risks associated with paint mixing and mixing room activities, providing helpful guidance to reduce the potential for loss or damage incidents.



**Important:** The bulk storage of flammable paints and materials is outside the scope of this document. The guidance provided in this document relates to production storage only intended for immediate or imminent use.

The Guidance provided in this document does not relate to paint spraying or curing. This can be found in the Aviva Loss Prevention Standards **Paint Spraying Operations - Property** and **Paint Curing Operations - Property**.

**Note:** This Global Loss Prevention Standard relates to paint mixing operations and is focussed on asset loss prevention and related risk management guidance. It is not intended to address liability/general liability exposures. The presumption is that all local regulatory territory requirements, and compliance with national/local building regulations, codes, or standards take precedence and have, or will be, met. In territories where local authorities have jurisdiction, compliance with applicable laws and regulations is assumed as a minimum requirement. The recommendations in this document are intended to supplement, not replace, local requirements.

## Understanding the Risks

Paint mixing creates a number of hazards that require careful management. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

**Flammable Materials.** Mixing and decanting flammable or highly flammable paints and solvents such as thinners, methylated spirits, cleaning liquids, etc., along with spills, leaks, drips, etc., can allow flammable vapours to accumulate and/or spread to other areas or drainage systems, creating a significant explosion or fire hazard.

**Extraction.** Inadequate, faulty, or damaged local exhaust ventilation (extraction) systems may not effectively remove the flammable vapours released during mixing activities, potentially creating an explosive atmosphere.

**Explosion Overpressure.** Because of the nature of the materials being mixed, there is the potential for an explosive atmosphere to be created, and if ignited this can cause an explosion. If mixing operations present this exposure, explosion relief discharging to a safe area needs to be considered in the mix room design.

**Electrical.** Inappropriate or incorrectly specified electrical equipment within the mixing room may generate sparks or hot surfaces, creating an ignition risk in potentially flammable atmospheres.

**Static Electricity.** Certain materials and fluids, combined with atmospheric conditions, can promote static charge accumulation and the potential for static discharge (sparking), which may ignite flammable vapours or residues.

**Aerosols.** Aerosol containers can contain highly flammable propellants which, when heated, can become pressurised and explosive. Storage at inappropriate or elevated temperatures increases the potential for explosion and/or missile-type events.

**Oxidising Agents.** Some materials, peroxide hardeners, etc., may act as oxidisers, and can initiate fires and promote their growth.

**Housekeeping.** Spilt paint, solvents/thinners and residues are flammable when fluid and are combustible when cured. Solvent-infused rags and cloths used for cleaning can self-heat through oxidation if not stored appropriately, potentially leading to spontaneous ignition.

**Containment and Segregation.** Mixing and storage of paints, solvents, and associated materials should be located within suitably fire-resisting compartments to prevent fire spread to other areas of the premises.

The potential for fire propagation can be aided by:

**Fire Load.** This is the amount of combustible or flammable material that could support fire growth, and includes obvious items such as paint stock and packaging, other goods/stock, pallets, etc., vehicles awaiting repair and combustible construction materials within buildings.

**Fire Penetrations.** Inadequate or defective fire compartmentation and firestopping can allow fire to spread through the property.

**Fire Detection and Protection.** Lack of, or inappropriately/incorrectly specified fire detection, protection and associated safety interlocks to any automated mixing plant can result in uncontrolled fire development.

## Management Programmes

### Risk Assessment

If there is a risk of explosion/fire in relation to the materials used at the premises, e.g., paints, solvents, thinners, etc., formal documented risk assessments should be completed and any corrective actions implemented promptly, as stipulated in local or national regulations, standard or codes - see Standards, Sources and Useful Links for further guidance.

**Note:** Statutory risk assessments are deemed the minimum requirement, and following the recommendations in this document can help further reduce the risk and exposures.

Where explosion or flammable vapour risk assessments are completed and areas are electrically classified, zoned etc., this needs to consider room entrance and exit points such as doors, windows, ventilation inlets and exhaust points, etc.

### Material Damage Risk Assessment

Before initiating risk management controls or installing any additional detection and protection systems, an assessment of the anticipated/possible financial losses, for both the material damage and business interruption exposures, in the event of a significant or catastrophic loss event should also be undertaken.

This helps ensure that management programmes, risk controls, detection and protection systems, etc., are sufficient and reflective of the potential property loss estimates.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standards **Material Damage Risk Assessment** and **Business Impact Analysis and Risk Assessment** for further guidance.

### **Managing Change**

Any proposed changes to business activities, materials being used, equipment and the premises, for risk management purposes should be managed through a formal Management of Change process. This helps ensure all stages of any change are progressed with minimal exposure to the existing arrangements. This is especially important for high hazard activities such as paint mixing, handling and storage.

- Any proposed changes should also be discussed with your property insurer, broker, and any authority having jurisdiction.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standards **Managing Change - Property** for further guidance.

### **Hot Work Operations**

Any hot work activities, which include the use of welding equipment, blowtorches, grinders, drilling and brazing, etc., at the premises should be:

- Prohibited within any mixing or flammable liquids storage locations.
- Any such works should be removed to a 'safe' location or only be completed via 'cold' methods.

**Important:** Where this is not possible hot works **must** be considered the last resort and should be conducted in strict accordance with the Aviva Loss Prevention standard **Hot Work Operations** after the area has been purged of any flammable vapours and flammable material containers cleared a distance of at least 10 metres. The following actions must also be implemented:

- All other activities in the building associated with high hazard materials such as flammable liquids, combustible dusts, gases, etc., must be stopped for the duration of the hot work task and the following fire watch.
- Any paint lines, pumping and mixing equipment should be appropriately isolated and electrically locked off before the work commences.
- Ventilation and extraction systems, including filters, must be thoroughly cleaned prior to any hot works taking place. This includes the removal of all combustible deposits and residue.
- Flammable vapour detection devices should be used to check for flammable vapours prior to, and during, the hot work. These should be used in any underfloor voids, tanks, etc., and extraction systems.
- Fire watches should be undertaken for a minimum of four hours after the hot works.
- Thermographic cameras, appropriately rated for use in environments where flammable vapours may be present, used throughout the process and fire watches.

Refer to Aviva Loss Prevention Standards **Hot Work Operations** and **Use of Thermographic Cameras - General Considerations** and **Checklist** for further guidance.

## Managing the Risks

### Location, Construction and Fire Compartmentation

Paint mixing should be undertaken in a separate detached building, remote to key buildings and valuable assets. This significantly reduces the potential for any explosions and/or fires involving flammable materials or vapours impacting other business activities.

Where this is not possible, mixing should only be undertaken within a dedicated mixing room providing at least 90 minutes fire resistance (integrity and insulation) from other areas of the premises. This includes any windows and/or doors, extraction ducting routes, etc., Ideally, this room should be located on an external wall of the building.

**Important:** The compartment fire resistance rating may need to be increased based on the values exposed and hazards. Consult your Property Insurer, Broker and authority having jurisdiction for further guidance.

The compartment should be fitted with explosion relief venting through an external wall (or the roof) and arranged to discharge to a safe location. The design and extent of the explosion relief venting should be determined through appropriate risk assessment and with supporting design calculations. The relief design must ensure the vented explosion flame front cannot expose personnel routes or any other assets.

The mixing room floor should include integrated spill containment designed to hold at a minimum 110% of the volume of liquids stored.

**Note:** This applies to all liquids, not just flammable liquids.

The containment should not be fitted with valves or other openings to aid drainage.

Mixing room flooring should be slip resistant, anti-static and appropriately earthed to prevent static accumulation.

All windows and doors should be kept closed during mixing, or other works involving vapour release, e.g., decanting, cleaning, etc.

Refer Aviva Loss Prevention Standards **Fire Compartmentation** and **Fire Doors, Fire Shutters and Fire Dampers** for further guidance.

The interior wall and floor surface finish of the mixing room should be designed to assist with cleaning operations and to maintain high housekeeping standards.

### Filter Media, Ventilation and Extraction

An extraction system should be present within the mixing room to exhaust vapours.

- Air inlets into a mix room should be at high level.
- Forced mechanical air extraction points from the mix room should be located within 300mm of the floor.
- This should be positioned at suitable heights to cover mixing and pouring points.
- The ventilation system should be designed:
  - ✓ So, the volatile organic compound (VOC) content can never exceed 25% of the Lower Explosive Limit (LEL) of the materials being used, or a minimum of 0.305m<sup>3</sup>/m<sup>2</sup> mix room floor area.
  - ✓ Arranged to have higher levels of extraction rate, based on appropriate VOC detection within the mix room.

- The entire ventilation system should be rated as suitable for use in potentially flammable atmospheres as appropriate.
  - ✓ Exhaust motors should not be located within the ductwork itself.
  - ✓ Fans should be non-sparking and appropriated earthed.
- Incorporate automatic low flow/air failure alarms, interlocked to isolate safely upon activation.
- The extraction system must be dedicated to individual mixing rooms only and not connected or manifolded to other ventilation systems, e.g., spray booth systems, other mixing rooms, etc.
  - ✓ Connected or manifolded systems can allow flammable vapours to spread between fire compartments, increasing the risk of ignition.
- The ventilation systems should be operational:
  - ✓ For at least 15 minutes prior to mixing activities commence.
  - ✓ During mixing activities.
  - ✓ For at least 15 minutes after mixing activities have completed and all flammable liquids have been returned to sealed storage containers or vessels.
  - ✓ For the paint mixing activities to commence in the room, i.e., if the ventilation is not operable the mix room should not be operating.
- The extraction ducting should:
  - ✓ Be direct, with as few bends as possible, to the outside. Any bends provided should be gradual, as any bend increases the potential for deposition, when vapours (with paint deposits) change direction.
    - Have appropriate inspection and cleaning hatches along its entire route so the entire duct can be visually inspected internally and cleaned.
    - Terminate with the discharge point away from any air intakes, potential ignition sources, storage, other equipment, etc.
- The mixing room heating requirements needs to be carefully considered given the low flashpoint materials present and determined via risk assessment.
- Any gas powered, electric or hot water heaters or humidification/ dehumidification units for heating and filtration should:
  - ✓ Be indirectly heated.
  - ✓ Feature safety interlocks linked to gas flow and flame failure, power shut down as necessary.
  - ✓ Incorporate non-combustible filtration.
  - ✓ Be monitored and interlocked for airflow and not just motor operation (as above).
  - ✓ Portable heaters should not be used.
- Any removable filters should be removed and replaced in line with OEM guidelines and usage rates/performance.
  - ✓ Filter linings should be non-combustible or approved as having a low flame spread rating and be fire resistant.
  - ✓ Unused/clean filters should be stored in an appropriate area away from the mixing room.
  - ✓ Used/soiled materials should be treated as combustible waste and managed accordingly.

**Important:** The ventilation system should be interlocked to isolate safely upon activation of any safety device, detection or fire protection system.

Refer to the Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Flammable Liquids** for further guidance.

## Decanting and Mixing

Any tools used within areas where flammable atmospheres may be present should be non-sparking. This includes outside the paint mix room where the ventilation system discharges as a dropped tool may cause a spark.

Static discharge is a common ignition source during decanting. Ensure:

- Metal conductive containers are used.
  - ✓ Plastic containers and funnels must not be used unless verified as being anti-static and able to be earthed.
- All containers (pouring and receiving) and funnels are appropriately bonded during the transfer of flammable liquids.
  - ✓ This should include any plastic or rubber gasketed joints, flexible connections and couplings and vessels used for dispensing purposes.
- The earthing of powered mixing tools connections should be visually checked and recorded regularly.
  - ✓ This is especially important after any maintenance works or other changes.
- Earthing connections should be tested annually or after any changes, to assure the resistivity in the earth loop is still appropriate.
- Workers wear anti-static footwear, gloves and clothing as determined by risk assessment.
- Personal devices, such as e-cigarettes and mobile phones should be prohibited from mixing rooms and immediate areas where flammable vapours may be present.
- Personnel should ideally pass an earth continuity test prior to entering the paint mixing area.
  - ✓ This can be confirmed with appropriate wrist and stand-on footwear resistance test stations.
- Employees are trained on pouring techniques to minimise the risks of static accumulation. i.e., reducing pour fall height.
- Any flammable liquids should only be transferred in secure lidded non-combustible containers. Paint/thinner tins should only ever be moved out of the paint mix room with the lid secured.
  - ✓ If thinners are required to be decanted and moved in smaller volumes then only approved/listed flammable liquid safety containers should be used.

Decanting and mixing activities should not be permitted if the ventilation system is not operating. This should be by interlocks between the ventilation system and mixing equipment and with formal operating procedures for the employees. This should include a formal verification before a shift commences and a number of times during the shift.

## Housekeeping

The mixing room, extraction network and immediate surroundings should be kept clean and tidy with no storage of ordinary or waste materials and spills should be cleaned immediately.

- All waste materials should be removed immediately to non-combustible, self-closing lidded bins. This includes personal protective coverings, wipes, etc. These bins should be located outside of the mixing room.
- Any waste that can self-heat, should be segregated from other waste in dedicated non-combustible, self-closing lidded bins.

- All paint related waste should be removed from buildings outside of operational hours, e.g., overnight, weekends, etc., and stored in appropriately segregated waste receptacles at least 10 metres from buildings.
  - ✓ Ensure waste receptacles are clearly identifiable as containing flammable materials.
  - ✓ Prohibit any hazardous activities near such stores.
  - ✓ Ensure that any materials assessed as being potentially self-heating/potentially spontaneously combustible are totally segregated away from all other waste in metal lidded bins.

Underfloor bunding designed to catch spills, leaks, etc., should be inspected daily and cleaned at a frequency determined via risk assessment. Daily inspection and cleaning may be necessary for mixing rooms in constant or near constant use.

**Important:** Underfloor collection areas need to consider the concentration of VOC vapours, as these are heavier than air and will accumulate in the lowest areas first.

Any air intake or exhaust filters should be replaced in accordance with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) recommendations.

- Ideally all replacement filters should be non-combustible.
- Contaminated filters should be removed immediately and stored in appropriate waste receptacles as above.

All areas of the extraction equipment should be subject to a formal inspection programme and cleaning programme.

- The frequency of cleaning should be determined via risk assessment and consider:
  - ✓ The nature of mixing operations.
  - ✓ Flammability of materials.
  - ✓ Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM), and installer recommendations.

The top of the roof of any mixing rooms should not be used for storage and should be maintained clear from any materials.

Cleaning solvents should not be kept within the mixing room. If these are classed as flammable liquids, they should be housed in an appropriately designed dedicated flammable liquids storage room or approved/listed flammable liquids cabinets, located in a separate area and only brought into the mixing room when needed.

- Cleaning solvents should never be used with mops and buckets or stored in open top drums/receptacles.
- Cleaning solvents should only be used with appropriately listed normally closed safety containers.
- Ensure cleaning guns are not soaked in open top drums/receptacles. Any cleaning only to be completed with appropriately listed safety containers.

Non-combustible absorbent material should be readily available for soaking up any spillages.

- Soiled absorbent material should be deposited in a metal receptacle with a metal lid (or self-closing normally closed non-combustible safety bin) and removed externally, at least 10 metres from buildings and other valuable assets pending removal.

**Important:** Consult your property insurer, broker and any authority having jurisdiction for further guidance relating to policy conditions regarding storage of flammable materials and cleaning regimes.

## Storage

- The mixing room should only be used for the short-term storage of flammable liquids and other materials, e.g., shift requirements.
  - ✓ Unused materials should be returned to flammable goods storage facilities overnight or outside of operational hours.

## Self-Inspection

Regular self-inspections of the mixing room and areas in immediate proximity should be completed by responsible persons to ensure compliance with mixing and housekeeping rules and standards.

The frequency of inspections will vary depending on the nature of the premises and mixing activities undertaken, however, at least daily checks and weekly thorough formal inspections should be undertaken.

- Ensure daily checks are undertaken prior to work commencing, e.g., correct clothing is being worn, all equipment including ventilation and extraction systems are functioning normally, earthing equipment is working correctly, no mobile telephones are being carried, etc.
- Ensure the self-inspections adequately address the housekeeping issues associated with paint mixing activities, e.g., static, spills and leaks, use and storage of solvents, extraction ducting, earth bonding, etc.
- The use of photographic evidence with such inspections, using a camera appropriately rated for use in environments where flammable vapours may be present, can prove invaluable.

The Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Self-Inspections** and **Flammable Liquids** provides useful guidance in this regard.

## Maintenance

Ensure appropriate Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) programmes are in place for mixing rooms and associated equipment based on Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEM) instructions and industry best practice.

- Ventilation systems should be maintained in line with any regulatory requirements.
- Explosion relief systems should be maintained at least annually. Special attention is required if the relief is through the roof with concerns such as ice, snow etc., impairing the action of the protection provided.
- Filters should be replaced before recommended replacement periods and appropriately disposed of.
- Earthing continuity arrangements and connections should be subject to at least monthly checks.

Refer to Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Maintenance Regimes** for further guidance.

## Emergency Response

An emergency response plan should be produced specifically developed to outline key responsibilities and actions in an emergency event involving paint mixing. The emergency response plan should include responses to all likely property and business interruption risks including fire, explosion, breakdown and escape of water and other fluid related exposures.

The emergency response rules should be formally documented, and appropriate training provided.

Refer Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Emergency Response Teams** for further guidance.

## Business Continuity

Every business should have a formal Business Continuity Plan in place. This should be reviewed to ensure disaster recovery and continuity arrangements remain adequate. Any actions generated should be addressed promptly.

Refer Aviva Loss Prevention Standard **Business Continuity - Seven Steps to Continuity** for further guidance.

## Automatic Detection, Fire Suppression and Associated Interlocks

The following should be considered as part of the overall risk management strategy for paint mixing activities:

- Automatic fire detection.
- Automatic organic vapour detection – this needs to consider the nature of the liquids in use, the density of the vapours created and the location of the detection in relation to the floor and damage (e.g., being kicked), contamination (e.g., paint spill).
- Automatic fire suppression such as automatic sprinkler or deluge protection.
  - ✓ Protection should be extended into the ventilation exhaust plenums and ducting using an appropriate arrangement to prevent the protection from being contaminated by paint droplets etc.

Interlocks should be provided between the above and any automated paint mixing activities, e.g., fire alarm activation or isolation (impairment).

In addition, interlocks should be provided to shut down all paint mix activities if there is a fire or similar emergency event in another area of the premises.

**Note:** Consult your property insurer, broker and any authority having jurisdiction for further guidance relating to detection, protection and interlocks associated with paint mixing activities.

## Contact Information

### United Kingdom

Please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions](#) or email us at [riskadvice@aviva.com](mailto:riskadvice@aviva.com). To speak to one of our advisors, call 0345 366 6666.\*

\*The cost of calls to 03 prefixed numbers are charged at national call rates (charges may vary dependent on your network provider) and are usually included in inclusive minute plans from landlines and mobiles. For our joint protection telephone calls may be recorded and/or monitored.

### Canada

Please visit [Aviva Risk Management Solutions | Aviva Canada](#) or email us at [arms.canada@aviva.com](mailto:arms.canada@aviva.com)

### Ireland

Please visit [Insurance Risk Management | Business Risk Management Insurance - Aviva Ireland](#) or Email us at [armsireland@aviva.com](mailto:armsireland@aviva.com)

Aviva have created a network of Specialist Partners to complement our in-house capabilities and to enable our policyholders to benefit from a wide range of risk management solutions at preferential rates and terms. Together, we provide solutions to help with the significant challenges of modern-day risk management.

**Note:** These partner relationships are wholly for the benefit of our policyholders with no income to Aviva.

The following Specialist Partners provide products or services in relation to risk guidance provided, discussed or referenced in this Loss Prevention Standard.

## **United Kingdom**

Thermal Imaging Cameras and PAT Testing Equipment - [Pass](#)

## **Ireland**

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## **Canada**

[Electrical Service & Solutions Toronto | IPE Canada](#)

For more information please visit: [Aviva Risk Management Solutions – Specialist Partners](#)

## United Kingdom

The statutory requirement for fire and explosion risk assessments is typically addressed within the various home nation fire risk assessment based legislation, and the Dangerous Substances and Explosive Atmospheres Regulations (DSEAR), which require identification of any “Hazardous Areas” of the premises where explosive atmospheres may be present, and classifying them as either Zone 0, 1 or 2 depending on the frequency with which an explosive atmosphere may be present.

- This assessment should be completed by a competent person and any corrective actions monitored until completion.
- Any hazardous areas should be clearly identified and signed.
- Any electrical equipment installed in these areas should be suitably designed and marked as being suitable for use in the appropriate zoned area.
- The risks of static discharge, sparking and related explosion should also be considered.
- Consideration should be given to motors, control panels, lighting, and other powered equipment in the hazardous areas.
- Any zoned or classified areas should be identified by appropriate markings and signage in the area.

Refer to the following links for further guidance:

- [Regulatory Reform \(Fire Safety\) Order 2005](#)
- [Fire \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#)
- [Fire Safety \(Scotland\) Regulations 2006](#)
- [Fire and Rescue Services \(Northern Ireland\) Order 2006](#)
- [Fire Safety Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)
- HSE Guidance - [Dangerous substances and explosive atmospheres](#)

Guidance on the safe use of flammable vapour ventilation systems can be found in:

- HSE Guidance - [Control of Substances Hazardous to Health](#)

## Canada

In Canada the requirements to complete regulatory fire and explosion risk assessments is addressed in Provincial OHS Regulations (core duty), Fire Codes, Electrical hazardous location classifications and where applicable, Federally regulated workplaces.

Guidance is also available in NFPA Standards, such as:

- [NFPA 30 - Flammable and Combustible Liquids Code](#)
- [NFPA 68 - Standard on Explosion Protection by Deflagration Venting](#)
- [NFPA 69 - Standard on Explosion Prevention Systems](#)

## Ireland

In Ireland the requirements to complete regulatory fire and explosion risk assessments is addressed in:

- [The Fire Services Acts \(fire safety law\) Safety](#)
- [Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005 \(workplace law\)](#)
- [Part 8 of the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(General Application\) Regulations 2007](#)

Guidance on the safe use of flammable vapour ventilation systems can be found in:

- [Safety, Health and Welfare at Work \(Chemical Agents\) Regulations 2001-2026](#)

## Loss Prevention Standards

These documents set out best practice recommendations to help reduce the likelihood and impact of losses.

Relevant Aviva Loss Prevention Standards include:

- **Paint Spraying Operations - Property**
- **Paint Curing Operations - Property**
- **Housekeeping**
- **Self-Inspections**
- **Maintenance Regimes**
- **Use of Thermographic Cameras - General Considerations**
- **Emergency Response Teams**
- **Business Continuity - Seven Steps to Continuity**
- **Material Damage Risk Assessment**
- **Business Impact Analysis**
- **Managing Change**
- **Electrical Installations - Inspection and Testing**

Please visit [Loss Prevention Standards](#) to view the full library.

## Aviva Risks Training Solutions (Uk only)

Aviva Risk Training Solutions, delivered through our Specialist Partner, SafetyCulture, provide free, bite-sized learning modules exclusively for Aviva policyholders.

Please visit [Aviva Risk Training Solutions](#) for further guidance.

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