

Painting a picture of green efforts in the building trade

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The smell that lingers in a freshly painted room is unpleasant, and even unbearable, for many adults.

But it is worse for infants, which is why designer Kimberly Ang, 24, who is six months pregnant, will ensure she chooses only odourless paints when she moves into her new home. "If it gets to even me as an adult, I can imagine it will be too strong for an infant," she said.

Fumes from some paint products are thick with volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which are harmful to humans and the environment.

But Nippon Paint Singapore has taken steps to reduce the amount of such compounds in some of its paints, by producing more consumer paints using water-based, and not oil-based, solvents. Oil-based products tend to contain a larger amount of VOCs.

Another paint company, SKK Singapore, also produces paint with low VOC content.

Nippon Paint has also made other aspects of its supply chain more environmentally friendly. It removed heavy metals such as cadmium and chromium from its products, and invested in technology that mixes paint on demand to reduce wastage.

For their efforts, both paint companies yesterday won two of eight awards given out at the inaugural SGBC-BCA Sustainability Leadership Awards, presented by the Singapore Green Building Council and Building and Construction Authority.

The awards recognise building owners and developers for their best practices, innovations and achievements in making their buildings environmentally friendly.

Other winners include consultancy Beca Carter Hollings & Ferner (SEA) for sustainability efforts such as recycling and carbon footprint-cutting measures.

Meanwhile, developers such as CapitaLand, which built the CapitaGreen office tower, and City Developments, which built the residential project Tree House, won for green building design.

Environment and Water Resources Minister Masagos Zulkifli, who gave out the awards last night, said that buildings account for about one-third of the electricity consumption in Singapore and a third of global greenhouse gas emissions.

"Therefore, our buildings of the future have to be greener, with improved water and energy consumption, so as to achieve a more sustainable way of living," said Mr Masagos.

Nippon Paint managing director Wang Chyang said the award highlighted how buildings can be "greened" in ways other than installing vertical gardens or rainwater-harvesting systems.

"For instance, we have products, such as solar reflective paint, that can help building owners save electricity as the technology in the paint prevents the sun's rays from heating up a room," he said.