



# Pretreatment & Organic Finishing

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## Trying New Technology Keeps Paint Shop Growing

When the organic finishing industry started changing over to high-solids, low-VOC paints we were all like children being taught how to do something new. There was a learning curve where mistakes were made and corrections were necessary.

A few months ago, an old friend reminded me of some of the problems we had years ago with organic finishing. He also pointed out some current problems at his shop where an attempt is being made to capture overspray high-solids, low-VOC paints so that they can be blended back into useful paint.

This particular shop uses a primer, followed by a top coat and bake, both at the same time. The primer is the base coat and the top coat is the touch-up coverage. The first coat is sprayed with airless electrostatic equipment, and the top coat is applied with conventional air spray. The paint is blended to different specifications and viscosities. Additives are used to help eliminate fish eyes and excessive build up on the edges. The work is being performed by a highly qualified individual with about 15 years' experience in spray paint application. He admits that he is still learning, however, because each different paint or color can create a minor change in the paint that can cause runs one day and ripples the next.

### Recycling Cuts Cost

The big advancement is that the shop is now recycling about 65–70 percent of its overspray paint. Painters have been trained and retrained to create a team approach to production. Everyone in the paint department has received training so that they can perform several different functions in the plant. They have been taught a method to recycle overspray paint and blend it with new paint to reduce pollution.

### Cross-training Increases Efficiency

The other day, one of the painters with more than 20 years' experience in the business told me he was being trained to weld and shear metal. This was after he had trained the welder to paint parts. They can now alternate jobs. Better still, they can alternate break times and keep the paint line

running a full 10 hr each day of a four-day work week. This way, employees work 40 hr in four days so they have three days off on weekends for scheduling personal business, spending time with family or enjoying other relaxing activities.

### New Methods Reduce Waste

Another significant savings is being realized in the company's hazardous waste disposal. Five years ago, the company shipped about 12.4 tons/yr of liquid solvent paint waste. The projected amount for 1997 is 4.8 tons, a 7.6-ton reduction over the past five years. More changes will be made in the future that will allow this shop to increase the volume of products it is processing, while reducing paint consumption and hazardous waste.

One of the company's goals is to get more customers to accept "black" as the color of choice. This will allow the shop to recycle more overspray paint, and reduce the number of color changes that are now required to process a variety of parts.

Just like children, most of us have to start out slow before we learn to accept new ideas or use new technology proficiently. This shop, just like many others today, is maturing with the use of new methods for reducing waste, and becoming more efficient with its surface finishing processes. So, don't be afraid to try new ideas and new technology. It's the right way to help keep our industry growing.

P&SF

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