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Since 1926 – Manufacturer of Decorative and Protective Paints and Waterproofing Coatings

SOMAY'S HELPFUL HINTS FOR PAINT APPLICATORS

How to Determine What Generic Kind of Paint Is on a Painted Surface You're Planning to Repaint

It is sometimes important to know what generic kind of paint is on a previously painted surface that you are planning to repaint, since some kinds of paint are NOT compatible with other kinds of paint. For example, you should NOT apply a 2-component, solvent-thinned, amine-cured epoxy over a vinyl acrylic "latex", water-thinned wall paint, because the epoxy coating will attack the "latex" coating, causing blistering or wrinkling, and thus cause an infirm surface on which to apply the new coating.

The XYLENE (XYLOL) Test

Wet a small rag with Xylene (Xylol). Then hold the xylene wet rag tightly to the previously painted surface continuously for approximately 15 or 20 minutes. When you remove the rag, the following observable condition will tell you what generic kind of paint is already on the surface.

If the Old Paint Is:

Vinyl/Acrylic "Latex", water-thinned, Flat or Enamel Finish.

100% Acrylic "Latex", water-thinned, Flat or Enamel Finish.

Alkyd (Oil) solvent-thinned

Epoxy Ester (single-component)

Epoxy (two-component, chemically-cured)

Urethane (two-component, chemically-cured)

Old Paint Condition Will Be:

Old paint will become like jelly and will NOT recover after the rag is removed and solvent (water) evaporates.

Old paint will temporarily soften, but will re-harden within 1 hour when you take the Xylene dampened rag away and the solvent (water) evaporates.

Old paint will blister and will NOT recover after the rag is removed and the solvent evaporates.

Old paint will become "tacky", but will re-harden within 2-3 hours when you take the Xylene dampened rag away and the solvent evaporates. Normally do NOT put a 2-component epoxy over a single component epoxy.

Xylene will have NO noticeable or significant effect on the old paint.

Xylene will have NO noticeable or significant effect on the old paint.

The “MEK” (Methyl Ethyl Ketone) Test

If it is important to know whether the old paint is a two-component epoxy as opposed to a two-component urethane, you can use the “MEK” test.

Wet a small rag with MEK. Then rub the wet rag back and forth across a small area of the old painted surface, using a moderate degree of pressure, rubbing at least fifty (50) times back and forth without stopping.

If The Old Paint Is:

Epoxy (two-component, chemically-cured)

Urethane (two-component, chemically-cured)

Old Paint Condition Will Be:

The MEK will start to remove the paint from the surface area rubbed.

The MEK will have NO significant effect on the surface area rubbed. The MEK may slightly dull the degree of gloss of a high-gloss finish, but will NOT remove the paint..

The “THUMBNAIL INDENTATION” Test:

If you wish to know if the old paint on the surface is an acrylic or vinyl/acrylic “latex”, water-thinned paint, as opposed to an alkyd (oil), solvent-thinned paint, and you have no chemicals available to make the determination, the “THUMBNAIL IMPRESSION” Test can be used and is generally relatively reliable. Just try to make an indentation into the old paint or coating by pressing the end of your thumbnail into the old paint, using as much pressure as possible.

If The Old Paint Is:

Acrylic or Vinyl/Acrylic “Latex”, water-thinned

Alkyd (Oil), solvent-thinned

Old Paint Condition Will Be:

The old paint will be relatively “soft”, so the thumbnail will make an indentation into the old paint on the surface.

The old paint will be relatively “hard”, so the thumbnail will not make any significant indentation into the old paint on the surface.

Please Note: The secret to every successful paint job is proper surface preparation. Please read and follow the instructions on the paint can. Never apply any paint over a glossy, dirty, oily or wet surface, or over anything which could adversely affect adhesion of the new paint to the surface.