

Floor coat companies stay on top of standards, providing rinks a variety of choices

By Jim Morris

There was a time, not long ago, when the manufacturers of floor coatings had to be very concerned with what the government – namely the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and its state counterparts – required.

Standards changed and the manufacturers quickly changed the composition of their plastic coatings to comply with the new rules that were designed to keep people applying the product from breathing in harmful fumes. Now, although the rules have not changed in several years, those manufacturers have anticipated future law changes, cutting back on chemicals that might be harmful to those who apply them or even skate on them.

“The coatings were always safe,” said John Nazzaro of Roll-On, based in Menlo Park, Calif. “The only thing that really changed was the time it takes for the floor to dry once it has been applied. With the newer products it takes longer.”

With California, always the state out in front with new environmental regulations, Roll-On reduced the content of chemicals that are contained to facilitate drying to satisfy the OSHA standards by introducing Roll-On 2000. That product was designed for distribution in that state and any others that required a lower level of the drying chemical.

“You have to handle it a little differently than Roll-On,” Nazzaro said. “It’s a little thicker and dries a little slower.”

Roll-On also introduced its Ultra-Clear a few years ago and advertises it as “environmentally friendly.” It has a water base that dries in hours and is just about odorless. The strong odor of floor coatings had been a complaint by rink owners since they first began protecting their wooden floors.

Ultra-Clear is particularly popular with rink owners who have wooden floors. It lasts as long as Roll-On and stays totally clear, according to Nazzaro.

Katherine Finchum of Finchum Floors said her company has to “keep on top of all OSHA regulations,” since it deals mainly with gymnasium floors for schools.

“We use a water-base product and make sure we furnish each customer with a safety certificate that tells them all about the product and what’s in it,” she said.

At Interskate Roller Rink in the Dallas suburb of Lewisville, Texas, Luther Bernstein not only owns the rink, but is the distributor of Sikafloor (Valspar) WP-8 and WP-8.1 floor coatings.

As a distributor, he has to make sure he sends the right product to the right area of the country, because of the different state laws that regulate such materials.

Bernstein deals with Sika factory representative and head of the division for sports



Sikafloor’s (Valspar) five-gallon pail of WP-8 floor coating contains less than the US EPA’s maximum allowed VOC total of 450 grams.

floor coatings Jeff Trench of San Antonio. He keeps up on the changing laws around the country and makes sure Bernstein and other distributors know who gets which product.

“Our product falls under the category of ‘varnishes,’” Trench explained. “According to the USEPA, a five-gallon bucket is allowed to contain no more than 450 grams of Volatile Organic Compounds (VOC). Our WP-8 is actually below that number.

“But as the years have gone by, there

have been pockets around the country where the VOC was lowered to 350, like a county in Arizona, the state of California and several places in New England and on the East Coast. There is now even one area around Los Angeles that puts the limit at 275.”

Several years ago, before Sika purchased the flooring products division of paint giant Valspar, the EPA was supposed to lower the entire country to 350. But that regulation was put off first for two years and then reinstated to begin in January of this year. But it was put off again until January, 2011.

“This is something we anticipated at Valspar,” Trench said, “so we positioned ourselves to put out a product that would exceed the standards we thought would be going into effect.”

He said his product is oil-based, but added that some of the water-based coatings don’t always meet the VOC requirements in some areas of the U.S.

Nicholas Johannes of IceCourt makes a floor called SkateCourt specifically for roller rinks and has never had a problem meeting OSHA standards, since it does not use a coating of any kind. The surface is permanent, lasting 20 years or more, he said.

“It never needs to be sanded or recoated,” Johannes said. “About the only maintenance involved is getting rid of the dust now and then.” This can be done with a solution of warm water and vinegar.

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