



It Ain't Easy Being Green

I really never thought that I would be quoting from a frog, but it just goes to prove that all things are possible.

Everywhere you turn these days, so many are boasting and proclaiming how green, how organic, how environmentally safe their products are. And that is certainly great and wonderful, but can you really believe that assault rifles are 100 % organic? Personally, I have been a proponent of the earth since birth. But I wasn't as concerned about it until I met a girl who was helping to organize the original Earth Day back in the 70's. While my original motivation wasn't the purest, certainly the ends were justified. We never became more than friends, but the concept of taking care of the planet we live on has stuck with me and to quote Martha Stewart, that is a good thing.

Well, here I am working for a company that sells chemical strippers. The reaction that most people have towards chemical strippers is that they are NASTY, HARSH, BURN YOU TO THE BONE, and by no means earth friendly. For most chemical strippers that is the truth. A large part of the products my company manufactures falls into that category. It is by demand and not by choice that we produce these products. If there were no demand, we would stop making them. But that doesn't mean that we are not on the forefront of what seems

sometimes to be pushing, persuading, dragging them kicking and screaming into a safer way to paint removal.

It does seem lately that more and more contractors are not only interested in learning about safer ways of doing things but are demanding better and safer products. In the past whenever I would bring up the safer strippers, I heard the following 'TOO EXPENSIVE, TOO SLOW, IF IT DON'T BURN, IT CAN'T REALLY WORK.' Well, I guess all things are really possible. More and more I hear from contractors 'CAN IT BE DONE SAFER, CAN I REALLY MAKE UP THE HIGHER COSTS IN LABOR/DISPOSAL/DOWNTIME COSTS?, NO MORE SKIN BURNS.' And the answer is most often YES!!!

One of the contractors I work with has sworn off caustic products for good. Even though his costs for materials have gone up, his cost of doing business has gone down. I recently visited him on a job site. At lunch his crew and I were sitting around the table when one of his workers proudly held up his arms and said, 'Look at my arms, not a burn on them.'

One of the other benefits of using safer strippers is that you no longer need the more expensive chemical suits and gloves. Because the safer products have a much higher spread

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rate, they actually cost about the same per square foot coverage. And what really counts after all is how much it costs per square foot, not per gallon. Also, because in many cases you are getting more square footage out of a gallon, you have a lot less waste as well.

My company makes the full gambit of paint removers, from the really nasty stuff to the safer stuff and pretty much everything in between. Part of the job is to go to job sites and do test patches to determine which product will work better. Personally I prefer to demonstrate the safer strippers, because on occasion, when demonstrating the nastier ones, I have gotten a burn and I really do not like the feeling. But you got to do what you got to do.

What it comes down to is that we really do have only one world to live in and how we live in it and what shape we leave it in for our children and their children is up to us.

Being a realistic optimist, I truly believe that most people want to have a better safer world and I can only try to do my best to help our industry do our part to make this a better world for all of and those who will come after us to live in it.

Chas Wolfson represents the Rock Miracle brand for Samax, Inc. He knows everything you'd ever want to know about restoration, paint stripping and deck preservation. His articles and observations about the industry are informative and funny, and he manages to bring a lighthearted touch to the heavy duty world of restoration. You can find his articles in various publications to the trade.