Technical Bulletin

Bacteria-The Spray Mans Nemesis

From our experience in dealing with texture problems, we have found that the single most common cause of complications encountered by the professional spray applicator has been a high bacterium count found in the texture tank. There is a direct and identifiable ratio of problems to bacteria-the higher the bacteria count, the more problems. While there are several problems attributed to bacteria, some of the most frequently reported include:

- Offensive Odors
- Foaming Wall or Ceiling Texture
- Discolorations
- Loss of Body or "Breaking Down"
- Excessive Fallout
- "Photographing"
- Soft Texture

Causes Of Bacteria

Bacteria in texture tanks are not uncommon; in fact, it would be unusual to find tanks without bacteria. When a product is formulated with natural or protein binders, and is used during warmer weather, it is a natural phenomenon for the bacteria to cultivate with moisture and warmer temperatures.

Bacteria thrive with heat and moisture. An analogy that illustrates how the bacterium cultivates is to compare the texture products to a commodity we are all familiar with.

When we take a fresh quart of milk and keep it refrigerated, it will last several days before bacteria will cause it to sour. If we left that same quart of milk in a room of 70° F, it would spoil in a day or two. However, if we added just one tablespoon of sour milk to a fresh quart of milk and put it out in the sun on a day of 90°, it will spoil in a matter of hours.

Textures will react to the same influences in much the same manner as the milk did in the illustration above. We know that there are many different strains of bacteria that will cultivate in the textures, especially during the summer months. Because we recognize that it would be virtually impossible to totally eliminate bacteria from the tanks, we recommend that the professional applicator approach the problem with the objective of controlling rather than eliminating the bacteria.

Successful containment of bacteria is simply the practice of good housekeeping and recognizing the problem before it gets out of hand. Only with the proper efforts can the applicator contain the growth of bacteria. Considering the alternatives, it seems that a few techniques found to be successful are well worth the time and effort. We recommend the following procedures be implemented to inhibit bacteria growth:

- When mixing, mix only that amount of material to be used that day. Do not leave more than small quantities of mixed materials in the tanks for more than 24 hours.

- Avoid prolonged exposure of mixed materials to direct sunlight of high temperatures.

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- During summer months tanks should be cleaned at least every other week - more often if necessary.

- Laundry bleach or chlorine can be used when cleaning tanks to kill some of the bacteria.

    A. Use five gallons of laundry bleach or chlorine per one hundred gallons of water. Note: Use extreme caution while handling these chemicals.

    B. Fill tanks to 1" above loading bar, agitate and cycle water and chlorine through hoses and back to the tank for at least fifteen minutes and allow to sit overnight, or over a weekend.

    C. Dispose of dirty water in a safe manner that will not pollute.

As a point of interest, the most frequent occurrences of putrefied tanks does not occur in deserts or areas of hotter climates where you might expect to find them. The texture applicators in these areas of high temperatures are more aware of the problems, their causes, and their cures, and consequently take greater precautions to eliminate them. However, applicators in areas of milder temperatures frequently experience complications during warmer weather and do not recognize the problem until its too late.

Please call us, if you would like our assistance. We want to help you before you have a problem.

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