

INFORMATION



Subject: Paint Stripping Problems / Corrective Action

We had a rough time this weekend with the first complete paint strip of an aircraft in our new hangar. Our success in painting aircraft in the hangar gave us confidence that we would be able to strip in the hangar without impact to people. Since this was our first complete strip, we put plans in place to do the work and monitor the situation. Despite our efforts, ventilation issues caused vapours from the stripping process to reach levels that affected a number of our people. This is completely unacceptable and we apologize to those employees who were affected. We are committed to learn from this weekend and make the necessary changes to our procedures.

What Happened?

- This was the first time we have ever stripped an entire aircraft in our new hangar.
- Cascade used a new product for stripping this weekend that is known to be safer for people and the environment. It is the most widely used product in the industry.
- Since it was a new product, we put a plan together to communicate and monitor the process. The Safety Department was on hand during the entire process.
- The application for the product was made by spray – standard procedure for a complete strip. Smaller paint strip jobs are done with a brush-on technique.
- Stripping began at 11:30 PM on Friday night. Ventilation was reported to good and readings outside the curtains were acceptable.
- On Saturday morning, additional stripper was applied to remove paint from the areas not fully stripped.
- Within about an hour of the second application, people (most working in the adjacent bay) began to complain of the vapours and feel unwell. A number of people went home for the day.
- Those working across the hangar were less affected.
- The ventilation system did not function effectively on Saturday and adjustments were attempted with limited success.
- The hangar door was opened at about 10:30 on Saturday to allow for increased ventilation.

Why It Happened?

- Ventilation system did not perform as expected.
- Lack of total containment of the paint stripping area from the mezzanine walkway.
- First time use of product with no previous experience.

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- Underestimated the amount of product needed for Saturday's application.
- Signage not effective to prevent people from accessing exposed area. Many people were affected walking to the lunchroom.
- Lack of trained personnel on the ventilation system.

What Are We Doing About It?

- No other crews will be scheduled to work in the hangar when we are stripping an aircraft, until we can test and prove that the ventilation is 100% effective.
- We will schedule paint stripping for Friday night at 11:30 and all day Saturday for touch-up and clean-up. For those weekends only, we will schedule the weekend crew to work the following Monday instead of Saturday. (We have one aircraft to strip in April and one in May.)
- Test the ventilation system with the use of "smoke bombs" to check the airflow. Adjust the proper ventilation settings for paint stripping.
- Monitor and evaluate ventilation performance. Carry out a function check of the ventilation system prior to beginning future stripping or paint tasks.
- Continue use of the new product. It is much safer than the old product.
- Improve product training to our Paint and Safety department.
- Evaluate the performance of the new product. Reduce process time if possible.
- Provide ventilation system training for those who need to know.
- Improve signage to prevent access to affected areas.
- Order and install additional paint curtains to protect the walkway under the mezzanine.
- Communicate more effectively about the schedule.
- Update the SOP's to reflect new procedures and provide training.

We regret this incident and wish to re-emphasize to all employees that if you are uncomfortable about the safety of your work environment, you have the right to see your supervisor and leave the area. We will be paying those who left for the day their full pay for the day. Those employees who left the facility without contacting their Supervisor need to see their Supervisor to make sure their pay is covered.

We will work hard to see that this does not happen again in the future.

Michael Coughlin
Executive Vice-President

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