

Quality finishes at Hadrian Manufacturing

Powder coater values people and technology

HADRIAN MANUFACTURING INC. (BURLINGTON, ONT.), which coats galvanneal steel toilet partitions and cold rolled steel lockers, believes it has the finest powder coating crews around. They're well-trained and experienced, and they work against a background of meticulous housekeeping and superior quality control. It all adds up to quality powder coating finishes.

Hadrian has open spray booths, so both wood fibres and dust can contaminate the area. To combat it, the company has pre-emptive weekly and daily housekeeping procedures.

"The supervisors are responsible for making sure it's been done," says Gary Greenway, vice-president of operations. "Initially, employees weren't keen on filling out the forms and checklists and signing off, but it's now part of the routine and they're accustomed to it." Hadrian also uses correct dust compounds and lint-free rags, while employees wear clean suits and lint-free uniforms.

Its application systems and booths have clear plastic walls, making it easy to see the dirt because light penetrates and the particles show up against the clear surfaces. There are few sharp angles to harbor dirt and powder residue. "We committed to round rather than square ducts and did our best to eliminate the 90 degree angles," says Greenway.

Hadrian's five-man crew can clean the booths and change the colour in about 20 minutes. Each person has a specific task and it's done in a particular order. "Two of the plants are constantly competing to clean their booth the fastest," says Greenway. "The rivalry is kind of neat and we encourage it as long as the booths are as clean as they need to be."

When needed, Hadrian turns to its suppliers for technical support. For instance, powder suppliers can run "smoke charts" on the ovens to ensure they're calibrated for that specific powder. Suppliers also provide post-cure testing for salt spray, mandrel, cross hatch, MK rubs, etc.

To ensure correct coating thickness at all times, Hadrian recently invested \$70,000 in a gun control unit. Supplied by ITW Gema, the system—called OptiTronic—uses digital technology to ensure consistent spray for uniform film thickness. It also controls voltage,



current, electrode rinsing air, powder output, and air volume to ensure constant quality.

It cost about 25 per cent more than a standard system, but Greenway expects it will pay for itself in several months. "We'll get the right amount of powder on the part every time, it'll reduce the powder that's wasted and reclaimed and we should use less to begin with," he says. To prevent coating shortfalls, corners, hinges and pockets on the lockers are manually coated before they're sent to the powder booth.

Positive attitude

But it's not just equipment and technology that ensure quality cures. At Hadrian, attitude of its employees is considered more important than training and experience. "The skills can be taught, so we hire employees with positive outlooks, a sense of responsibility and a willingness to learn," says Greenway. Poor employees are let go before they affect morale and productivity.

Employees try harder at Hadrian, thanks to the firm's no layoff policy. The 150 employees at its three plants know their jobs are safe thanks to the addition of student and temporary staff during peak periods.

"It creates greater loyalty and lowers turnover, while ensuring a terrific backlog of resumes," says Greenway. Employees also know that doing an outstanding job is financially worthwhile. "We share the successes equitably by paying company-wide bonuses based on productivity, reliability and overall scrap."

At Hadrian, several factors contribute to a quality cure—dedicated staff, technology and a commitment to keeping the spray area clean. **cm**

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A Hadrian employee does a quality inspection on a locker.



An ITW Gema gun control unit ensures consistent film thickness.

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By Kara Kurylłowicz