

Metals Offer “Ironclad” Way To INCREASE Paint Sales

to be covered by very small particles of loose rust and dust, which must be removed before any coating is applied. This can be accomplished with the following three-step procedure:

- 1 • brushing off loose particles with a soft-bristle brush;
- 2 • scrubbing the surface with a detergent-and-water solution;
- 3 • rinsing the surface thoroughly with clean water.

It is important to note that surface preparation should not be skipped just because an iron or steel surface is new. Even if rust isn't visible to the naked eye, new ferrous metal may have small amounts of rust that must be removed with the same procedures before any coating is applied. Also, new metal may have mill oil on it; before applying any coating, this, too, should be removed by scrubbing and rinsing.

Timing of Priming Is Critical

Once the ferrous metal surface is free from rust and other impurities, priming should be done immediately. This timing is vital because rust can begin to re-form on the metal if the surface is exposed for as little as a day or two! If that happens, your customer will have to repeat the surface preparation. So, be sure to advise customers about the need to properly time their work.

In addition, when painting ferrous metal, it is important to apply not just any primer, but the right type of primer ... namely, a high quality, acrylic latex or oil-based, corrosion-inhibitive product. Again, this is a point on which your customers should not compromise. If they use another type of primer, they could see rust reappear rather quickly.

Acrylic latex corrosion-inhibitive primers work very well in settings where the metal is not exposed to heavily corrosive materials.

Unlike oil-based primers, they can be applied immediately after cleaning the surface, even if it is still slightly wet. And they offer the added advantage of being “environmentally friendly,” with low odor and low VOCs.

Solvent-based corrosion-resistant primers, on the other hand, are appropriate for highly corrosive settings (chemical manufacturing sites and the like). They also can be

applied in lower temperatures than comparable acrylic latex primers.

How Many Coats?

When it comes to advising customers on the number of coats of primer and paint to apply to ferrous metal, the cardinal rule is to follow the recommendations of the coating manufacturer.

Some finish coats — which go by the shorthand “DTM” (direct to metal) — are designed for direct

Wrought iron that is properly prepared and painted can be a thing of beauty, as evidenced by this gate in Nevada City, California.



Bare wrought iron can begin to rust in just a day or two.





application to ferrous metal. These products offer far better corrosion protection than do conventional finish coats. Multiple coats may provide additional protection — again, follow the manufacturer's recommendations.

For more demanding situations, the best performance can usually be had by applying two coats of primer, then applying one or two topcoats. In more corrosive industrial environments, a mid-coat, which may be different from the topcoat, may be used. Each layer adds important attributes to the coating system:

- The **primer** helps inhibit corrosion and rusting, while providing a more inviting surface in terms of adhesion.
- When used, a **mid-coat** will give the film greater toughness, strength and overall integrity, so that it is better able to withstand physical damage.
- The **topcoat** of paint provides UV resistance and color-fastness.

All-Important Topcoat

Selection of the right type of topcoat is also very important when painting ferrous metal. Recommend that your customers apply your highest quality acrylic latex paint — again, in two coats, unless the manufacturer's label says otherwise.

Primer and paint should always be applied to ferrous metal in thick

Metal structures like this lighthouse are protected from very demanding environments by high-performance rust-inhibitive coatings.

coats for optimum durability and rust resistance. Homeowners doing smaller jobs can achieve this with brush application, while painting contractors doing larger jobs can use rollers or airless spray.

If customers take the time to do good surface preparation, promptly prime the surface and apply thick coats of the right type of primer and paint, they can often get eight to 10 years of service from a ferrous metal paint job.

Now that you know the fine points about painting ferrous metal, you can begin to stake your claim to the metals market in your area. Even if you don't strike it rich, you'll surely be able to mine this niche year after year for added profitability.

Should you want to dig deeper into this subject, check out the ASTM guidelines for ferrous metals, or contact the Society for Protective Coatings or the National Association of Corrosion Engineers. •

With proper surface preparation, a top quality acrylic latex paint can last eight to 10 years on ferrous metal.

