

Polyethylene Product Painting or Stenciling Procedure

Paint: The best paint to use for coating polyethylene is an exterior acrylic paint or any elastomeric paint that maintains its flexibility when dry. This will allow the product to expand and contract without cracking or damaging the paint finish. Any brand of exterior acrylic paint should suffice when painting a polyethylene surface.

Surface Preparation: The most important factor in getting paint to adhere to the polyethylene surface is proper surface preparation. Newly molded products have a glossy appearance to them. Before painting, the glossy surface needs to be removed so there is a dull surface left for the paint to adhere to. There are two ways to prepare the surface for painting.

1. One is to abrade the surface of the polyethylene by hand sanding or sand blasting to remove the waxy, glossy surface. Be careful if sand blasting the surface so as not to remove too much material. It takes very little pressure from a sand blaster to remove the glossy surface.
2. The second way to prepare the surface is to flame treat it. This is accomplished by using a handheld portable propane torch or open flamed gun and gently guiding the flame along the surface to remove the glossy appearance. Take care to keep the flame moving and not hold it in one spot, remember this is plastic and can melt easily.

Application: When painting a polyethylene surface the goal is to achieve a good bond between the coating and the product. The paint can be applied by any of the standard application methods, such as spraying, rolling, or brushing. You will get the best results by using the spraying method, such as air guns, airless sprayers, or aerosol cans. It is very important that you apply multiple light thin coats of paint instead of heavy coats due to the surface tension characteristics of the polymer.