

Resene TradeLines

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“ We're getting suspiciously close to the end of the year, which means that I'm fast running out of time to get those New Year resolutions started... I mean finished, let alone the ridiculous to do list the boss gave me. Of course with things hotting up you'll need to take extra care with yourself and the various cans and pails of paints you are using and keep both out of the sun as much as possible to keep you both looking and performing your best. We've also got you some information on skin sensitisers that may save you some bother in the future. And if you happen to be reading this from the comfort of a white van, you might just find the research on the back of this issue interesting. ”

Scratch that

From time to time we hear of people who become so allergic to something that they have hardly even opened the container and they break out in a rash... or worse. Of course we all kind of figure it will never happen to us, but unfortunately there is no guarantee that just because you are ok today that you won't suddenly have a problem tomorrow. Worst of all, if you do start having a problem with it, your only option may be to change jobs, which when you have a lifetime skill set of painting may not be as easy as it sounds.

Allergic sensitisation, affecting normally the skin or respiratory system, can develop by being exposed to specific substances. While high exposures may make the allergy develop faster, once the allergy is established (often referred to the person being sensitised) even tiny amounts of the substance can set off an allergic reaction. Then what was often a small problem at the start can cause major problems later when the person affected often can't tolerate any exposure to the substance.

Generally occupational skin problems first affect the hands and forearms, which are most likely to have come into contact with specific substances at work, but can spread further. The first signs are generally dry, red and itching skin, which can then become swollen, cracked and blistered. No one substance will affect everyone in the same way – so something that may cause an allergic reaction over time in one person, may not affect others working beside them until years later, if at all. If the person affected has a holiday often the skin problem will improve, and this can be a useful way of narrowing down what is causing the reaction.

Liquids and using water can break down the skin's natural defence barrier, so those working with these are most at risk. As both are things a painter deals with day in and day out, the problem of sensitisation is reasonably

common among painters. Extreme temperatures, the sun and other factors can also contribute.

Skin sensitisers are generally either proteins in natural materials or chemicals. Protein reactions tend to be much faster than chemical ones, which tend to develop over time. Skin contact with chemicals can actually cause respiratory allergic symptoms even if the chemical hasn't been inhaled through the mouth or nose. Because of this often slow development, it tends to lull people into a false sense of security.

However, you can minimise the risk... where you can, select less hazardous products for the job to minimise the risk. If you can't eliminate, then make sure you minimise exposure - generally this will be through wearing and using the right protective equipment and tools, such as gloves, barrier creams, long sleeve clothing to avoid exposure of forearms and so on. Protect the whole body, including face and neck and hands and make sure protective clothing is intact (no holes where they shouldn't be!) and regularly washed or replaced to avoid chemical buildup. Keep skin clean but avoid excessive overwashing – instead protect the skin well first so that in most cases it doesn't get dirty and when it does, it is easy to get it clean. Dilute chemicals correctly to avoid contact with overstrength products and take care when using them to avoid skin contact and splashes. If skin contact does occur make sure that the affected area is washed immediately.

If you start to discover skin problems then get yourself in to see a doctor pronto! This is no time to be a hero. Remember the most likely first signs are dry, red and itching skin, which may be followed by swollen, cracked and blistered skin.

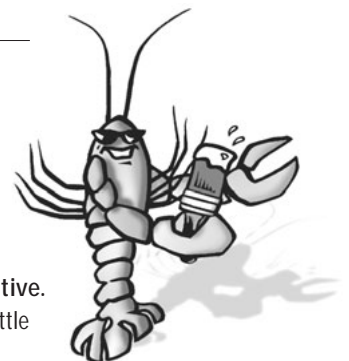
And if you have a new kid on the block working with you, make sure you pass this info onto them so that everyone keeps safe.



Potential lobster alert

Before you get fried to a sizzle in that sun they are promising us, get yourself down to Resene and grab yourself a free pot of suntan lotion. Just because you have to paint outside all day is no excuse to get yourself burnt to a cinder... especially with free suntan lotion just waiting for you to come and get it.

While the weather is hotting up, don't forget to keep your wet edge under control with Resene Hot Weather Additive. Available in a range of sizes through to the new 4L pack, you can keep a pack handy for those days when things get a little too hot under the collar for you and the paint.



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