



Guest Editorial

By Paula Hirtz – May 2005

The EPA Needs Your Input!

I learned a lot while growing up in the original equipment manufacturer (OEM) automotive paint industry. In fact, that experience helped shape me into the person I am today. It was there I learned the meaning of hard work, efficiency, attention to detail and pride. These words describe the individuals who work in the automotive industry. I see the same work ethic and sense of pride in the auto body refinishing industry with one distinct difference. Many of the auto body refinishing shops are small family businesses offering services directly to their friends and neighbors.

Like the OEM industry, the auto body refinishing industry is facing new challenges on the environmental front. The OEM industry is in the process of adapting its materials and processes to meet new regulatory requirements. Likewise, the auto body refinishing industry will also have to adapt to the new auto body refinishing area source rule that is expected to go into effect by August 2008. The new rule will focus on coating operations and will apply to all auto body refinishing operations in the United States, from hobbyists to independent auto body shops, dealerships and NASCAR.

Since joining the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in September 2004, I have supported the development of Clean Air Act rules to set limits on emissions of hazardous air pollutants (HAPs) from various sources. The auto body refinishing industry is one of those sources. Individually, most shops are small sources of air pollution; but across the nation, when considered collectively, the effect on the environment is significant. HAPs emitted from the auto body refinishing industry include organic compounds such as benzene, toluene and xylene, and inorganic compounds such as chromium, cadmium and lead. These HAPs present potential health risks to neighboring businesses and communities.

Who is involved in the rule-making process? The EPA does not issue rules in a vacuum. It seeks input from many stakeholders. Why do we need your input? We need you to help us understand what is achievable and at what cost. Our goal is not to put people out of business. Our goal is to make the air cleaner. To develop this rule, the EPA has reached out to create partnerships with numerous auto body repair shops all across the country and with associations such as the Automotive Service Association to gain perspective on the issues affecting your industry. This interaction has improved our understanding of the challenges faced by your industry, but we still need your input.

The rule is starting to take shape based on our interaction with stakeholders. It is not the EPA's intention to contradict existing state regulations for auto body refinishing shops, nor do we want to issue a final rule that is overly complicated and difficult to comply with. We do intend to offer incentives to use low- or no-HAP-containing paint products, since many are available, but are not widely used in our country. When HAP-containing materials are used, we intend to require generally available control equipment (such as booths, filters, high

volume, low pressure (HVLP) or HVLP-equivalent spray guns to control emissions), recordkeeping and training. Associations such as ASA have brought many other issues to the table, including point-of-purchase controls for refinish products and a registration process for auto body refinishing shops.

How can you make your views known on these or other issues? Please contact me or Kim Teal, the EPA project manager for this rulemaking, with any questions or comments at hirtz.paula@epa.gov or teal.kim@epa.gov.

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