

What to Consider in Selecting a Method of Surface Preparation

The question of selecting a method of surface preparation depends upon a number of factors other than the economic conditions involved. Among these are:

1. Condition of the surface to be painted,
2. Type of service to which the metal and paint will be subjected,
3. Practicality of using a particular method because of environment, and
4. The type of paint which is to be applied.

The requirements for surface preparation are more severe as the wetting ability of the paint decreases. One reason why the anticorrosive red lead pigment in linseed oil paint, L.I.A. Formula 6-1 (the same as Fed. Spec. TT-P-86a, Type I, or SSPC Paint 1-SSP) has achieved an eminent reputation for protection of steel is due to its superior wetting characteristics. It has demonstrated excellent anticorrosion performance when used over steel where small amounts of rust and tightly adherent mill scale are present. A surface condition such as this is often the best that can practically be obtained in the field. Equally good results are being obtained by similar high red lead in oil systems, which

have good wetting characteristics, as used by railroads, public utilities, highway departments, and others.

The linseed oil vehicle, however, is slow drying and it is often necessary to use a faster drying oil-resin vehicle combination such as L.I.A. Formula 6-7 (TT-P-86a, Type II). Such a paint is limited in its wetting ability by the presence of synthetic resins. Therefore, surfaces receiving paints of this type must be more carefully cleaned of corrosion products and contaminants if maximum performance is expected.

Going still further, painting requirements may necessitate the use of the very rapid drying synthetic vehicle type paints, such as L.I.A. Formulas 3-7, or 6-13 (TT-P-86a, Type III) or 6-18, (MIL-P-17545) (Bu Ships Paint Formula No. 116). These paints are useful and excellent when applied over carefully prepared surfaces.

The following are the recommended methods for the surface preparation of steel to which red lead paint is to be applied, along with a table indicating the type of structural steel, the exposure, drying time, L.I.A. recommended red lead paint and specification for the recommended cleaning methods.

Surface Preparation Methods

Factors to be considered in selection of any metal protective paints are surface preparation and the condition of the surface at the time of application, the character of the base metal and the environmental exposure.

Only those surface preparation methods which are pertinent to structural steel cleaning and which are most generally used are considered in this Technical Letter. The major methods of surface preparation of steel may be classed under three categories:

- I. Mechanical surface preparation
 1. Hand cleaning
 2. Power tool cleaning
 3. Sand or shot blasting
 4. Flame cleaning

II. Chemical surface preparation

1. Weathering
2. Chemical cleaning
 - a. Alkali cleaning
 - b. Pickling
 - c. Steam cleaning
3. Phosphate surface treatment

III. Solvent cleaning and degreasing

The following are general descriptions of the more common surface preparation methods. Under each heading will be found a reference to the detailed specification for that method, which appears in Volume II, Steel Structures Painting Manual, published by Steel Structures Painting Council, 4400 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh 13, Pa.

MECHANICAL SURFACE PREPARATION

Hand Cleaning (SSPC-SP 2-327)

Hand cleaning is best adapted to spot cleaning for maintenance repainting and is not recommended for use over large areas where more effective methods are available. It hits only the high spots of a surface. The operation is most commonly accomplished with stiff, springy wire brushes, abrasive paper or cloth, scrapers, knives, chisels, or chipping hammers.

The hand cleaning operation varies with the type of mill scale and depth of corrosion. Wire brushing is one of the oldest methods of mechanical surface preparation and generally partially removes only loosely adhering mill scale, rust, old paint films, and dried or caked soil. It does not remove adhering mill scale. If stratified rust is present, it should first be removed by chipping and scraping before hand brushing. A surface which is flat and free of obstructions and irregularities may be hand brushed at a rate of two square feet per minute.

Chipping hammers remove most of the mill scale, but if the action is too vigorous over thin metal, it may deform or even pierce the metal. Chipping may drive mill scale or corrosion products into a soft metal surface. Chipping is usually followed by either wire brushing or scraping or both to remove loose mill scale or paint films. Unless care is exercised, some imbedded mill scale may remain which may cause localized early paint failure.

Hand scraping alone with a sharp-edged scraper is probably one of the least effective methods of surface cleaning of metal as it removes only semi-adhering mill scale and old paint films.

If oil or grease are present, solvent cleaning with frequent changes of the solvent should precede hand cleaning; otherwise oil or grease will be spread over the descaled base metal. Should explosive vapors be present, a special non-sparking wire or tool must be employed.

Power Tool Cleaning (SSPC-SP 2-327)

Hand cleaning methods are duplicated by power tools designed for brushing, sanding, grinding, scaling, impact cleaning or chipping. The general sequence of operational techniques are the same as under hand cleaning. Power tool cleaning is more effective and more economical than hand cleaning for larger surfaces.

A large variety of shapes and sizes of brushes, grinders and sanders are available and are mostly of the rotary type. The electrically operated rotary brushes are effective at operational speeds

of 300 to 3000 r.p.m. under load, while the rotational speed of the pneumatic driven brushes is regulated by the air pressure and the volume of the air. Power brushes may cut through thin mill scale but the wear on the brush is excessive. The power brush must be kept moving to prevent burnishing which produces a poor surface for painting.

Grinders and sanders are effective in the preparation of a surface when the abrasive grit size is carefully selected for the job at hand.

While power operated scaling and clipping hammers are faster than the hand operated type, they are slow as compared to other available methods. For very thick surface accumulations, they have merit. The tool must be kept sharp. The operator must be careful not to remove sound metal, drive mill scale into soft metal, or leave metal burrs on the surface, the latter two conditions contribute to early paint failure.

Oil and grease should be removed by solvent cleaning before power tool cleaning to prevent spreading.

In either hand cleaning or power tool cleaning a primer coat of red lead paint should be applied before any rusting becomes visible. A paint system of two initial coats of red lead primer followed by suitable finish coats will give excellent service.

Sand or Shot Blasting (SSPC-SP 2-327)

Sand or shot blasting procedures are employed where all the mill scale, rust, rust-scale, foreign matter (except heavy deposits of grease or oil), or paint are to be removed and the base or "white" metal exposed for paint application. Both processes are based upon the abrasive action on the surface of various sized particles of sand, shot, grit or other abrasives being discharged, either wet or dry, at high pressure. Metal or non-metallic synthetic shot or grit is usually employed where recovery of the abrading agent is possible, while sand is used primarily for operations in which the abrading agent is expendable.

Successful blasting techniques require careful consideration of pressures, size of nozzle, distance of nozzle from the surface, kind of material to be removed, type of abrasive, loss of abrasive, health hazard, cost of abrasive, and type of surface preparation required.

The grit should be of sufficiently small size to remove effectively the surface contaminants without excessive working of the metal surface or the formation of crater-like surface depressions, ridges or metal hairs. The paint may not

provide adequate film thickness over the ridges or tips of the metal hairs, and thus they become focal points of premature paint film failure. Excessive surface working of the metal may develop unequal stresses in some surface areas and become cathodic to adjacent areas. This will accelerate corrosion as the paint film commences to fail.

Dry sandblasting, although widely used, should be done with due health precautions, not only to protect the operator from fine abrasive dust but also other workmen in the immediate environment. Machinery in the vicinity of sandblasting operations should be shielded.

Wet or hydraulic sand or shot blasting eliminates abrasive dust hazards, but if water soluble inhibitors such as chromate or phosphate types are used, they present different health hazards which must be met with proper precautions.

The time lag between completion of blasting and priming is dependent upon the type of blasting, the humidity of the surroundings or the presence of soluble inhibitors in the wet blasting fluid. Any blasted surface should be further chemically treated or primed with red lead paint before any visible rusting occurs.

On surfaces prepared by sand or shot blasting two primer coats of red lead paint followed by a suitable finish coat should give 10 to 12 years of service.

Flame Cleaning (SSPC-SP 4-527)

Flame cleaning may be used on many fabricated shapes where the structural sections are of proper stock thickness, are readily accessible, not subject to warping, and where dehydration of the surface is mandatory. Flame cleaned surfaces must be painted before condensation commences; hence, they should be painted while still warm and dry. Recommended practice requires painting within two hours.

Flame cleaning is used to remove unbonded mill scale and old mill scale which has not been previously painted. Rarely does flame cleaning remove all the mill scale. It must be followed by wire brushing and dusting before priming. Flame cleaning should not be used on stock less than 3/16 in. thick.

CHEMICAL SURFACE PREPARATION

Weathering (SSPC-SP 9-527)

Possibly the oldest surface cleaning operation is atmospheric weathering, a process whereby the removal of the mill scale is primarily dependent upon the corrosion of the metal and the subsequent

loosening of the mill scale by creeping of the rust between the mill scale and the base metal. In six months to a year most of the loosened mill scale will have fallen off. Any remaining products of corrosion and partially loosened mill scale must be removed by sandblasting, wire brushing, scraping, or chipping before the surface is primed. Areas of tightly adhering mill scale can only be completely removed by sandblasting. Once the base metal is exposed, it should be immediately coated with a red lead primer. Usually, in clear weather, six hours or less will serve as a safe time interval between completion of sandblasting and application of a red lead primer.

Field reports indicate this method of surface preparation followed by two coats of a red lead primer paint and a suitable top coat will provide from 8 to 10 years of adequate protection.

Chemical Cleaning

Alkali Cleaning

Alkali cleaning is more efficient and less hazardous than solvent cleaning. Alkali cleaners include soak tank cleaning, pressure spray cleaning, electrolytic cleaning, scrubbing and brushing for structural steel assemblies.

Alkali cleaning removes oil, grease and soluble rust stimulants. Alkali cleaning does not remove heavy or carbonized oils or rust inhibitive oils. The surface is left alkaline and before painting it must be rinsed in a dilute acid water solution to prevent saponification of a primer vehicle.

Pickling (SSPC-SP 8-527)

Pickling is an effective method of surface preparation for painting. Mill scale and corrosion products are completely removed by pickling dephosphorized iron or steel in dilute acid solution.

The main disadvantage of this method lies in the necessity for following the pickling with a neutralizing and water rinsing operation to remove all free acid and reaction products, and then a rinsing in either dilute phosphoric acid or chromic acid solution or mixtures of these to create an inhibited metal surface. This must be followed by a thorough drying of the metal surface prior to painting.

The undesirable attack of the base metal by the pickling acid is minimized and regulated by the use of suitable inhibitors which may be dissolved in the pickling bath. These inhibitors create and regulate a preferential selective attack on the mill scale and corrosion products. The surface should not be etched excessively,

but slight etching of the surface aids in the mechanical adhesion of the paint film.

This type of surface preparation is limited mainly to either small size objects or structural shapes that are easily handled.

Red lead primer painting of the pickled surface should be done before the thin film left by the chemical treatment shows any visible signs of corrosion.

After this type of surface preparation, two coats of red lead primer paint followed by a suitable top coat should give adequate service for 10 to 12 years.

Steam Cleaning

Where the size, shape or location makes it impossible to solvent wipe the surface, steam cleaning is becoming quite general in field surface preparation. Steam cleaning removes dirt, grime, grease and loose oxidized paint, but does not remove rust or mill scale.

The most efficient steam cleaning includes the addition of detergents to the steam-water mixture. If the detergent-steam-water mixture is sufficiently alkaline, it will also remove grease.

The surface after steam cleaning is usually alkaline and must be adequately rinsed to prevent saponification of the paint vehicle.

Phosphate Surface Treatment (SSPC-PT 2-337)

Phosphate treatment leaves the surface in a satisfactory condition for maximum paint life, but it does not remove mill scale. Therefore, for the most efficient treatment the surface should be pickled or blasted prior to phosphate treatment. Insoluble metal phosphates resulting from the phosphate treatment extend the life of the paint film by improving adhesion, retarding underfilm corrosion, reducing electrochemical ac-

tion and the decomposition of the paint vehicle by corrosion products. The metal phosphate surface is strong and flexible enough to withstand thermal shock.

The phosphate treatment has been applied by spray process, immersion, brushing, or portable spray equipment.

The MIL-C-10578 specification may be consulted for details. The U. S. Corp of Engineers Manual for Painting (1955) refers to cold phosphate or chemical metal conditioners.

When properly applied, phosphate surface treatment has been successfully used on ship plates, river dam gates, locks, etc. The paint application and service are the same as for pickled iron or steel.

SOLVENT CLEANING AND DEGREASING

(SSPC-SF 1-327)

Structural steel may be solvent cleaned by wiping, dipping, or spraying, depending upon the size of the members. Wiping is widely used. It removes the oil and grease readily and rapidly and requires a minimum of floor space.

In the use of solvent cleaning by wiping the solvent must be changed frequently to prevent spreading of the oil and grease, and due precaution, depending upon the solvent employed, must be observed to guard against fire hazards and toxicity of the solvent. Solvent cleaning does not remove rust or mill scale.

Military Specification, MIL-P-116a, gives cleaning methods for steel and mentions the type of petroleum solvent to use. Federal Specification P-S-661 or ASTM Specification D484-52 cover the use of "Stoddard Solvent." Federal specifications are available for most of the important solvents.

Surface Preparation of Steel Recommended for Red Lead Paints

(Quick Reference Summary)

If You Have to Paint	For This Type of Exposure:	And the Drying Time Required Is	Then the* Recommended Red Lead Primer Is	And the** Following Surface Preparation Is Recommended:	But These Steps May Also Be Required:
Structural Steel	Atmospheric	24 Hr.	L.I.A. 0-1	Hand Cleaning SSPC-SP 8-SST or Power Tool Cleaning SSPC-SP 8-SST	Solvent Cleaning to Prepare Other Cleaning SSPC-SP 1-SST
Structural Steel Oil Storage Tanks	Chemically Contaminated Atmospheres and Marine Environments	24 Hr.	L.I.A. 3-7	Blot Cleaning SSPC-SP 5-SST or Pickling SSPC-SP 8-SST	
Structural Steel	Atmospheric	16 Hr.	L.I.A. 0-7	Blot Cleaning SSPC-SP 5-SST or Pickling SSPC-SP 8-SST	
Structural Steel	Atmospheric	24 Hr.	L.I.A. 0-3	Hand Cleaning SSPC-SP 8-SST or Power Tool Cleaning SSPC-SP 8-SST	Solvent Cleaning to Prepare Other Cleaning SSPC-SP 1-SST
Structural Steel	Atmospheric	4 Hr.	L.I.A. 0-13	Commercial Blot Cleaning SSPC-SP 6-SST or Pickling SSPC-SP 8-SST	
Structural Steel, Especially Building Frames	Atmospheric, Temporary (6 Mos.)	8 Hr.	SSPC 13-SST	Solvent Cleaning SSPC-SP 1-SST and Wire Brushing SSPC-SP 3-SST	
Hydraulic Structures, e.g. Crest Gates, Sluice Gates, Tailrace Gates, Exposed Structural Steel at Pumping Stations	Partial or Continuous Immersion in Fresh Water	8 Hr.	L.I.A. 7-4	Blot Cleaning SSPC-SP 5-SST and Coating Pre-treatment MIL-C-15328A	
Hydraulic Structures, e.g. Crest Gates, Sluice Gates, Tailrace Gates, Exposed Structural Steel at Pumping Stations	Partial or Continuous Immersion in Fresh Water	1 Hr.	L.I.A. 7-5	Blot Cleaning SSPC-SP 5-SST and Coating Pre-treatment MIL-C-15328A	

*The recommended red lead primer formulas may be found in Red Lead Technical Letters of the Lead Industries Association. The first number is the number of the Technical Letter in which that formula appears and the second is the number of the formula in that Technical Letter.

**All SSPC specifications referred to herein may be found in Volume II of Steel Structures Painting Manual, Steel Structures Painting Council, 4400 Fifth Avenue, Pittsburgh 13, Pa. MIL specifications may be obtained from any General Services Administration Regional Office.

Surface Preparation of Steel Recommended for Red Lead Paints

(Quick Reference Summary)

<i>If You Have to Paint:</i>	<i>For This Type of Exposure:</i>	<i>And the Drying Time Required is:</i>	<i>Then the Recommended Red Lead Primer is:</i>	<i>And the Following Surface Preparation is Recommended:</i>	<i>But These Steps May Also Be Required:</i>
Railroad Rolling Stock	Atmospheric	18 Hr.	L.I.A. 8-2 or 8-4	Hand Cleaning SSFC-SP 3-SST or Power Tool Cleaning SSFC-SP 3-SST	Solvent Cleaning to Remove Other Coatings SSFC-SP 1-SST
Ships (Topside, Interiors, Boat-Topping), Bridges Over Tidelwater, Docks	Marine, Intermittent Immersion in Sea Water	6 Hr.	L.I.A. 8-18	Blast Cleaning SSFC-SP 3-SST or Pickling SSFC-SP 8-SST	
Ships (Topside, Interiors, Boat-Topping), Oil Storage Tanks	Marine, Intermittent Immersion in Sea Water, Chemically Contaminated Atmospheres	1 Hr.	L.I.A. 8-20	Blast Cleaning SSFC-SP 3-SST or Pickling SSFC-SP 8-SST	
Ship Bottoms, Buoys	Immersion in Sea Water	4 Hr.	L.I.A. 8-24	Blast Cleaning SSFC-SP 3-SST or Pickling SSFC-SP 8-SST	
Galvanized Steel, One Coat	Atmospheric	18 Hr. 4 Hr. 18 Hr.	L.I.A. 9-1 9-2 or 9-3	Solvent Cleaning SSFC-SP 1-SST and Phosphate Pre-treatment SSFC-PT 2-SST	
Weathered or Rusted Galvanized Steel, One Coat	Atmospheric	18 Hr. 4 Hr. 18 Hr.	L.I.A. 9-1 9-2 or 9-3	Solvent Cleaning SSFC-SP 1-SST and Wire Brushing SSFC-SP 3-SST	
New Galvanized Steel, Top Coat to be Applied	Atmospheric	18 Hr. 4 Hr.	L.I.A. 9-4 or 9-5	Solvent Cleaning SSFC-SP 1-SST and Phosphate Pre-treatment SSFC-PT 2-SST	
Weathered or Rusted Galvanized Steel, Top Coat to be Applied	Atmospheric	18 Hr. 4 Hr.	L.I.A. 9-4 or 9-5	Solvent Cleaning SSFC-SP 1-SST and Wire Brushing SSFC-SP 3-SST	

*The recommended red lead primer formulas may be found in Red Lead Technical Letters of the Lead Industries Association. The first number is the number of the Technical Letter in which that formula appears and the second is the number of the formula in that Technical Letter.

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LEAD SAFE PANS FOR ALL BUILDING TYPES

With the increased importance of stall showers in today's building plans, simple provision should be made to provide for complete waterproofing of such fixtures. One of the easiest, surest, and most widely used waterproofing methods is the use of lead shower pans. The specification on the following page is provided therefore to assist those who wish to take advantage of lead's outstanding waterproofing qualities.

Sheet lead can also be used to advantage in the waterproofing of areas other than shower stalls or rooms. Lead safe pans under wada fountains, kitchens, and other places where leakage or spillage may occur, will provide the same high degree of waterproofing that is expected of lead shower pans. In general, the same method of installation as outlined in the specification for lead shower pans should be followed.

IMPERVIOUS TO MOISTURE Lead shower and safe pans properly installed provide an impermeable moisture barrier between the unit itself and the adjoining walls and floors, a barrier that is necessary if damage to beams, joists, studs or decorated surfaces is to be avoided. Lead pans cannot absorb moisture. Such is not the case with non-metallic pans.

DURABLE Sheet lead is extremely durable for such applications. Its use as a standard material in chemical plants handling many types of corrosives attests to this fact.

WORKABLE Sheet lead is extremely workable and can easily be made to conform to the surfaces on which the sheet lead pan is applied. Thus, voids between the lead pan and flooring, inherent in more rigid materials, are not left to settle out after the tile floor is installed, causing the tile to crack and buckle.

ADAPTABLE Sheet lead is extremely adaptable for use in all size or shape shower stalls or rooms. Sheet lead pans are easily and quickly installed for minimum size shower stalls, or in large rooms or areas.

COST The cost of sheet lead shower and safe pans is surprisingly low. The basic material cost has leveled off to a point where lead is directly competitive with other quality materials. The ease of working lead reduces costs.

PRECAUTION Green cement, concrete or mortar containing free lime may be corrosive to lead as it is to many other common metals. It is therefore necessary to coat the lead with asphaltum to protect it during the curing stage of the cement. After the curing, the asphaltum coating which provided the necessary interim protection is no longer important.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE The technical staff of the Association is at your disposal in helping you solve your lead problems. Other "Bulletins" in this series include "Lead Construction Bulletin No. 1—Specification for Lead Waste Connections for Plumbing Fixtures with Integral Traps" available upon request. Address your request for literature and other inquiries to: Architectural Dept., Lead Industries Association, 60 East 42nd Street, New York 17, N. Y.

Specification for LEAD SHOWER AND SAFE PANS

Sheet lead for shower and safe pans shall be in accordance with Federal Specification (QJ 1-201a, June 4, 1951, Lead Sheet, Grade B or better.

Shower stall (room), floors *

shall be completely lined with 4 lb. (6 lb., 8 lb.) sheet lead pans turned at least 6 in. up the side walls all around or at least 1 in. above the finished floor. Corners of pans shall be folded tightly against the upstand and soldered (welded) along the top. (Corners of pans shall be a lap joint prepared by lapping one side of the upstand over the other at least 1/2 in. and soldering (welding) the vertical seam.)

Top of upstands shall be set back 1/4 in. into notches in studs. Top of upstands shall be dressed tightly against masonry walls. In rooms too large to be covered by a single sheet of lead, seams joining sheets shall be lapped at least 1/2 in. in direction of flow and welded, soldered, with solder sweated between the sheets to the width of the overlap. Pipe or structural members protruding through the lead pan shall be flashed with lead boots or sleeves extending to a height equal to the upstand and be soldered, welded to the pan. Concrete under pans shall be brought to a smooth finish with a mixture of cement and sand, and the lead well coated on both sides with a good grade of asphaltum. Wood floors under pans shall be firm and even with nail heads set, and made of well-seasoned 3/4 in. boards covered with asphalt-impregnated building paper weighing at least 15 lb. per square. Inside of pans on wood floors shall be well coated with a good grade of asphaltum. Building paper shall be laid over the inside of lead pans on top of the asphaltum coating if the pans are left uncovered and there is danger of mechanical injury. A cement and sand mixture shall be used inside pans as foundation for tile. Pans shall be graded to the floor drain to which they shall be securely soldered, welded, (clamped). The trap flange shall be countersunk and weep holes provided in the drain just above the lead pan. The trap shall be plugged and pan filled with water as a test before installing the cement and tile.

*If other than shower stall or room, specify here exact area to be lined.