

# Safe option

**HABM** reviews a safe way of removing unwanted paint and varnish from housing association properties.



Uses include removing graffiti from masonry or fibre glass; cleaning plastic floor tiles where paint has been dripped or spilled and unusual requirements such as recently encountered by the Whitefriars Housing Group.

If you have ever painted the town red, then you will know the after effects can often last longer than intended. For housing associations with budding decorators as tenants, then paint, red or any other colour, can be a potentially dangerous and environmentally concerning problem.

Growing awareness of Health and Safety issues together with environmental concerns about volatile organic compounds (VOCs) being released into the atmosphere, have led to the introduction of a new generation of water borne paints and varnishes.

Safe Paint and Varnish Remover is a non-toxic, non-corrosive, biodegradable solution developed and patented by Ithiel Mogridge and sold by Action Products Ltd. The easy to use gel claims to be able to remove all types of paint. It soaks into the paint making it soft and squashy so that it can be easily scraped away without damaging the substrate. All treated residues are water washable.

The product is designed to be kind to the operatives involved in its manufacture; kind to the people involved in its storage, distribution and end use and kind to the environment when the tools are washed in the sink and the water goes down the drain to effluent.

## In practice

In the context of housing association maintenance, this versatile gel offers fast, effective, low odour, cleaning of various surfaces. Uses include removing graffiti from masonry or fibre glass; cleaning plastic floor tiles where paint has been dripped or spilled and unusual requirements such as recently encountered by the Whitefriars Housing Group, when an outgoing tenant had painted a toilet cistern and pedestal with four coats of gloss paint. The operative was able to remove all paint safely and without injury to him or the plastic components, reporting that the product

was "easy and straightforward to use..." Effective graffiti removal is a vital part of maintaining a cheerful, well kept ambience in any neighbourhood. Until now, the removal of graffiti from brick and stone has proved difficult and if carried out by a contractor, expensive. Many of the cleaning products available are caustic and can be dangerous to use. Some of those also require some form of pressure cleaning to remove final traces, which can also cause damage. Safe Paint & Varnish Remover is tested and endorsed by Brentford, Chiswick & Isleworth Crime Prevention Panel and was found to remove graffiti without damaging the substrate.

It is simply painted on liberally, left for a few minutes, scraped and then washed off with water. The benefits of using the product include:

- Non-toxic and safe to use;
- Removes paint effortlessly, without the need for scrubbing;
- Works within minutes (on contact with felt pen, paint pen);
- No need for expensive power pressure cleaning equipment;
- No secondary damage caused by pressure cleaning;
- No secondary damage caused by acid residues left in masonry;
- Savings on equipment costs;
- Savings on labour costs due to ease of removal.

*With thanks to Ithiel Mogridge, industrial research and development chemist and director of Action Products Ltd, for preparing this article.*

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Floor tiles cleaned using Safe Paint & Varnish Remover.