



SUSTAINABILITY THAT RACKS UP

Michigan-based job shop, Livonia Tool & Laser, uses Powdura® ECO from Sherwin-Williams to achieve exceptional performance and promote sustainability.

As a largely PO-based fabrication and material handling shop, Livonia Tool & Laser is equipped to handle multiple capabilities, but is primarily known for its portable rack fabrication. Operating within a 200,000-square-foot manufacturing space, the company services roughly 800 customers per year including big names like General Motors, Kawasaki and John Deere.

Livonia Tool & Laser, which claims 1943 as its official year of establishment, has progressed tremendously throughout the past century. Irv Harris, founding owner and toolmaker from Livonia, Michigan, started his garaged-based business, Harris Trailers, producing pull-behind campers in the 1940s. By 1978, the operation outgrew its facility in Livonia and moved production to Litchfield, Michigan.

“My grandfather started this organization, and over time it’s evolved so much that its history isn’t necessarily clear-cut,” says third-generation Livonia Tool & Laser owner, Michael Rickabaugh. “But our longstanding history and ability to adapt to industrial demands keeps us competitive in today’s market.”

A COATINGS SOLUTION WITH A CONSCIENCE

At the beginning of 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was just beginning, Livonia ran into some coverage issues with a RAL 1023 yellow powder coating for a

customer outfitting warehouses with chutes, conveyors and automation equipment. Around the same time this issue surfaced, Livonia’s well-rounded lead estimator, Michael Schneider, was introduced to an intriguing new powder coating from Sherwin-Williams that uses a recycled-plastic resin – Powdura ECO.

Sherwin-Williams Powdura ECO powder coatings use an innovative, high-performing polyester resin comprised of 25% pre-consumer recycled plastic (rPET). Each pound of Powdura ECO coatings contains the equivalent of 16 sixteen-ounce recycled plastic bottles and delivers the same performance as conventional polyester powder coatings.

“As a solution to the coverage issues we were experiencing with our powder at the time, we jumped at the opportunity to try Powdura ECO because of its high performance and sustainable makeup,” says Michael Schneider, Lead Estimator, Livonia Tool & Laser. “I’m passionate about using renewable resources, and Powdura ECO is affordable. It’s rare to come by a product that’s both sustainable and affordable.”

Using Powdura ECO to fix the coverage issue was so successful that Schneider pitched it to another customer contracted to fabricate and coat racks for a global retailer known for its widespread



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distribution facilities throughout the world. Impressed by its performance and pleased with its sustainability aspect, this retailer now specifies Powdura ECO for all its rack finishing jobs.

“With roughly a year of using Powdura ECO under our belt, I promote Powdura ECO to our customers whenever I get the chance to explain its value proposition,” says Schneider. “Without sacrificing performance, this product makes our customers feel good about the materials they’re specifying, and in turn, makes their end-users feel good too.”

LEADING WITH TRUST

Although trying new products can cause apprehension, Schneider and Rickabaugh attribute their willingness to test Powdura ECO to the trustworthy relationship they’ve built with Sherwin-Williams sales representative, Doug Roberts, and their technical service team.

“The thing we like most about working with Sherwin-Williams is their breadth of skills and technological knowledge,” says Rickabaugh. “We go to them for advice and wisdom on topics beyond paint because they treat us like we treat our customer – willing to help in any way we can.”

With shared values, like service, speed and quality, the companies align on what matters most – customer support – which takes shape in the form of expertise, troubleshooting and training.

For example, when Livonia started using Powdura ECO on its paint line, they quickly realized they needed application training from Sherwin-Williams. With guidance on the right type of spray equipment, Livonia applicators were able to spray a higher volume of the powder product with a higher rate of transfer efficiency – decreasing application time and increasing throughput. Within just a few sessions, the Livonia team was ready to go with steady application.

As a 35-year veteran of Sherwin-Williams, Roberts was especially excited for Livonia to use the new line of powder coatings.



“Livonia was one of our very first customers to use Powdura ECO, which says a lot about their business and their priorities,” says Roberts. “They took a chance on a new product, and now they get to pass the benefits onto their end-users, which is important to us as a coatings supplier.”

REDUCING ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT, ONE STEP AT A TIME

While Litchfield might not yet be known for its sustainability initiatives, Livonia Tool & Laser is taking small yet impactful steps to reduce its environmental footprint. Powdura ECO is a stride in the right direction, says Schneider.

Suitable for interior and exterior environments, Powdura ECO can be customized to meet specification requirements and is available in a variety of chemistries. In addition to its durability and sustainability benefits, the line provides exceptional color retention and solvent resistance, and when compared to conventional polyester powders, can offer increased flexibility and impact resistance.

So far, Livonia has used Powdura ECO on its portable racks, but the shop plans to use it for other applications, as there’s no sign of business – or eco-conscious manufacturing practices – slowing down.

“We operate in a small, rural town with plenty of cornfields and cows,” says Rickabaugh. “But that doesn’t make us ill-informed on sustainability efforts. We know how important environmental stewardship is to our customers and the growth of our business.”



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