

Special Paint Equals No Complaints

LOW-ODOR, FAST-DRYING PAINT IS A SUCCESS IN ALASKA

Imagine trying to paint the interior of your house with dozens of friends and family members present every day, unable to leave, and most of them extremely sensitive to the strong odor of paint.

If that sounds like mission impossible, imagine the folks who operate the Anchorage Pioneer Home, an assisted-living center in Anchorage, Alaska. Recently management decided to repaint all the hallways and lounge areas in the 163,000-square-foot, five-story facility.

In short, they wanted the building's halls to look as serene and inviting as the stunning scenery visible from its windows. The home overlooks the beautiful Park Strip, a "greenbelt" area that offers views of the breathtaking Chugach Mountains and Mt. McKinley, which looms over the city's skyline.

"We can't block off an entire wing when we paint a hallway."

Butch Von Lohhoffel

Opened in 1977, the state-owned facility is almost a small village within the city, featuring a main dining room, five smaller dining areas, several lounge and recreation areas, and numerous activities. And as its name implies, many of the residents here are Alaska pioneers—homesteaders, miners, bush pilots and the like who arrived here in the early- to mid-1900s.

PAINTING WAS PROBLEMATIC

But the obstacles involved made the painting project seem almost as problematic as the views are beautiful.

First of all, temporarily relocating the facility's more than 160 patients—who range in age from the mid-60s to 104—was not an option. Nor was blocking off entire hallways, building wing by building wing, notes Butch Von Lohhoffel, the facility's procurement specialist.

"We can't block off an entire wing when we paint a hallway," he points out.

"We can block off a section of it, but even then, we still have to leave room for patients, some who are in wheelchairs, and staff to pass through."

Moreover, the residents do most of their socializing in the home's public lounge and recreation areas, particularly the main lobby of each floor, where large-screen televisions are located.

"There are a lot of people coming and going," Butch says.

Secondly, many patients couldn't bear exposure to strong paint odor, particularly those with respiratory problems.

"We needed a paint that was durable, low-odor and non-toxic," Butch comments. "Quick-drying capability was a big concern, too."

Good coverage was also a requirement, as the areas at issue were painted in colors that were considerably more popular in the 1970s and '80s: orange, purple and green.

"The colors were, well, really *bright*," deadpans Butch. "They weren't very soothing."

PROBLEM RESOLVED

Fortunately, Butch found the perfect solution after conferring with representatives from Grainger and Rust-Oleum Corporation. They recommended Sierra Performance Beyond™ Multi-Purpose Enamel, a water-based, urethane modified acrylic paint. The paint dries quickly (tack-free within 30 minutes), which allows application of multiple coats per day.

Management opted for a soft green hue called Pines of Norway.

"This was a very soothing color that



Repainting the interior of the Anchorage Pioneer Home was made easier because of fast-drying paint.

gives the building more of a homey feel," Butch says.

One of the biggest hurdles faced by staff painter Kyle Schilling was the Formica® room doors. Paint does not adhere well to this material, so Schilling had to remove each door and take it to a maintenance room, where it was lightly sanded, then painted with a white Rust-Oleum primer and one coat of the Sierra Performance.

That process took about two to three days per door, Schilling observes, because the maintenance room can accommodate only one door at a time. While the doors were missing, residents maintained their privacy via curtains hung on spring-loaded rods in their doorways.

SO FAR, SO GOOD

The painting project is still underway, with an expected completion date of January 2008. Thus far, staffers give the paint rave reviews.

"The biggest thing was we didn't have to move residents out of their rooms," Butch says. "And Kyle likes the paint. He could very quickly put on a second coat with very little downtime, and once it's cured, it's very durable."

"With normal paint, he'd have to wait an hour or two in between coats," Butch continues. "But with the Sierra paint, it was only a 15- to 20-minute wait in between coats. I was very impressed with that."

"The paint covers well," Kyle agrees. "It even covered up that nasty purple color in the first-floor hallway."

Butch says the residents also give the paint a big thumb's up.

"I think they like it," he chuckles. "I haven't heard any complaints. When I hear nothing, I take it they're very pleased." **SL**

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