

## Finishing Decks: Application and Maintenance

Application of deck finishes when done properly ensures uniform color, even film, and adequate penetration. Several factors will affect stain application: moisture, environmental conditions, and method of application.

- Moisture content of the wood should be less than 15% on the day of application. Greater than 20% moisture will impede proper penetration of the stain causing possible adhesion issues later. After a rain storm, it may take 3 or 4 days for boards to dry thoroughly. Applying stain when rain is imminent in 1-2 days after staining can adversely affect cure and adhesion. Checking for weather conditions both before and after the staining day is necessary.
- Environmental conditions that can affect staining are temperature, humidity, dew point and air movement. Best conditions are when the relative humidity is between 50 and 80%, temperature between 60 and 80°F, no direct sunlight and a slight breeze. In very dry, windy conditions or direct sunlight, **Benjamin Moore® Extender 518** can be used with water based **Arborcoat®** products at 4 fluid oz. per gallon of product which will increase the workability of the stain. Do not apply stain when dew or frost is present as these will interfere with cure, penetration and proper adhesion. If the deck is close to the ground or has a skirt around the perimeter, inadequate ventilation will slow the drying process.
- Application can involve many methods but roller or spray application followed by back brushing is quick and yields a very uniform finish. Maintain a wet edge to avoid lap marks. For optimum uniformity, full lengths of 2-3 boards should be coated at a time, working from one end to the other stopping only at a natural break point. Whizz® rollers or application mitts can be used to coat spindles. Cross brush to fill cracks, and then apply in direction of the wood grain. Over-application will lead to film build-up, forming a film that can ultimately crack, blister or peel. A thick application can also result in a sticky surface, due to interference with drying properties.

Maintenance should be done annually using a cleaner like **Multi-purpose Cleaner® (N318)**. Mold and mildew should be removed as necessary to avoid slippery walking conditions. Translucent and semi-transparent stains may require recoating every 12-24 months. Semi-solid and solid stains can last 3 to 5 years without recoating.