



## Case Study : Midwest Prefinishing Inc.

### Midwest Prefinishing is Protecting our Healthy Air

Midwest Prefinishing Inc. specializes in high quality prefinishing of mouldings, doors and stair components for dealers, distributors and manufacturers. The company has two facilities, one in Middleton and one in Sun Prairie. In 2008, the company received a free operational audit through the Healthy Air Initiative.

A UW-Extension pollution prevention specialist visited and made the company aware of potential ozone-producing manufacturing operations. Ozone, a gas that is the main ingredient of smog, is a concern during the summer months. Even at low levels, it can affect respiratory health. It is formed when two primary pollutants oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) react with sunlight and warm temperatures.

As a result of the visit, Midwest Prefinishing modified its production schedule to reduce ozone-producing activities on hot days. Smaller pieces of moulding take much less coating and off-gas fewer VOCs than do doors and other larger pieces. The switch to scheduling smaller piece for finishing on hot days is advantageous both to Dane County's air quality and to Midwest Prefinishing's end product, since high temperatures can have an adverse effect on finishes.

Over time, the company has been replacing petroleum-based finishes with reduced-VOC finishes. The vast majority of work done at the Sun Prairie facility now uses VOC-free latex finishes. In other product lines, Mark Larson of Midwest Prefinishing says the company is going as green as possible, because it is more cost efficient to move away from petroleum-based products and healthier for employees and customers alike. Last year the company emitted only one ton of VOCs, down from 13 tons in 2007.

In other product lines, Midwest Prefinishing is using more recycled material, including a line of soffits with a 25 year warranty made of a composite material made with recycled milk bottles. The company also signed up for Clean Air Action Day Alerts so it can notify its employees and educate them about steps to take at work or at home when ozone or fine particle levels are high.

For a free operational audit at your work site, at  
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