

Existing Adhesives Removal - Solvent and Chemical Cleaners

Solvents and other chemical cleaning solutions are sometimes used to remove existing adhesives or coatings from substrates prior to installing new floor coverings. These products are available as water-based compounds, bio-based solvents such as citrus, limonene and soy, hydrocarbon and chlorinated solvents, and others.

As a stated company policy, XL Brands/Bostik does not warranty installations of any floor covering over any substrate that has been treated or cleaned with a solvent or chemical cleaner. This policy is written into product data sheets and is reproduced on container labels. XL Brands/Bostik also does not support any warranty, in full or in part, for use of its products on substrates where solvent or chemical cleaning solutions were used, whether in conjunction any other floor abatement system, sealer, encapsulation, adhesive, or floor system installation assurances or warranties issued by another party.

Solvent and chemical cleaning solutions can leave residues and penetrate into a concrete slab to some level that may go unnoticed until well after an installation is complete. As these solvents or chemical cleaning residues eventually begin to migrate to the surface, the results can adversely affect the adhesive bond and floor covering, cause odors, and affect air quality.

Solvents and other chemical cleaning solutions are sometimes used to remove existing cutback adhesive in conjunctions with the removal and abatement of vinyl asbestos tiles (VAT). Those contracted to remove asbestos containing flooring must do so in a manner that complies with current OSHA standards, as well as the regulations of any current Federal, State and local government agencies governing the removal on in-place asbestos containing materials (ACM's). One of the precautions with any removal process is to minimize the risk of getting asbestos fibers into the air. To accomplish this, asbestos removal and abatement professionals may utilize water, surfactants, polymers, or solvents when removing the VAT and underlying adhesives. However, to obtain a clean concrete substrate suitable for applying new adhesive and floor covering replacement, no chemical or solvent residues or contamination should remain after the removal and abatement process.

This requirement is best met by avoiding the use of solvents or chemical cleaners in the abatement and removal process whose residues may adversely affect the new installation. (References: ASTM F710; RFCI Recommended Work Practices for Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings; 29CFR 1910.1001)

As necessary, XL Brands/Bostik recommends that any existing adhesives be removed by mechanical means only. Dry scraping, grinding, or bead blasting will result in less adverse effect on the substrate, and non-ACM adhesive waste generally can be readily disposed of. Tackiness on pressure sensitive adhesives may be removed by sprinkling the surface with mineral-based inert absorbent. Alternately, the adhesive may be dampened (do not over-wet or create standing water) using a dilute solution of 1 oz. of dishwashing liquid per gallon of clean water to soften the adhesive and to control the amount of dust generated during the process. After wetting the adhesive, let it stand for up to an hour to allow the adhesive to soften.

Where solvents or chemical cleaners have already been applied, it is advisable to allow as much time as possible for the substrate to dry, aided by applied ventilation, and other means. A rubber mat placed on a concrete substrate may be examined after 24 to 48 hours for any residues that may resurface. If the area underneath the mat remains dry and free of any contamination, it could indicate that there is no immediate problem with residues. Encapsulation, applying membranes, cleaning, shot blasting, etc. may also reduce your risk of encountering problems with the installation. Ultimately, however, there is no practical way of determining the condition of the slab and whether it is entirely free of the solvent or chemical cleaner residues.

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