

## Wax On, Paint Off?

**P**actical Sailor gets many reader inquiries about ways to extend the life of their LPU coatings. One of the most common questions is whether to use wax products and other shine restorers like Poli Glow acrylic coating. Although most gloss restorers will not damage an LPU coating, we always caution against using them in the year or so prior to any planned topsides paint job as the residue of such coatings can have catastrophic effect on future paint work.

Deliberately ignoring our own advice in order to test this, we coated the bottom of a carbon-fiber epoxy-resin windsurfer with an LPU. The surface had been wet-sanded and Turtle-waxed for several years, but prior to painting it, the surface was de-waxed with Interlux 202 and then wiped with acetone and numerous clean cotton cloths. The surface was sanded with 320-grit wet-dry paper, and after another solvent wipe-down, the LPU coating was sprayed on. The flow out was even, and there was no sign of fisheyes, orange peel, or other surface imperfection, other than a couple of bugs that landed and failed to take off.

The LPU finish cured typically with a superior gloss. Two months after the paint had been applied, it began to lose adhesion, and at the one-year point, about 20-percent of the surface had failed due to poor adhesion.

With a sharp putty knife and razor blade, the remaining 80-percent of the coating was removed. Rather than repainting the surface, testers wet-sanded down to 1,200 grit and machined buffed the epoxy resin to a high gloss. Another paint



*Despite basic pre-painting prep and de-waxing, the LPU lost adhesion shortly after application.*

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application will be tried, but this time after more de-waxing, sanding the surface to 80 grit, applying epoxy primer prior to more sanding, and applying an LPU finish.

**Bottom line:** If you have any plan to paint the topsides of a boat, avoid waxing it or using acrylic coatings on it, unless you're prepared to go the extra mile in prepping for the LPU.

The easiest way to extend the life of your enamel or urethane coating is to keep it clean. Saltwater left to dry on the surface will turn to tiny salt crystals that become magnifying glasses, intensifying the sunlight and causing UV damage—not to mention the sandpaper effect. Rinsing the boat with fresh water as often as possible will keep salt crystals from forming.