

Process Specification for the Application of Electromagnetic Interference (EMI) Control Coatings

Engineering Directorate

Structural Engineering Division



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1.0 PURPOSE

This specification provides requirements for the application of electromagnetic interference (EMI) control coatings on various substrates. EMI control coatings are commonly applied to electronic equipment enclosures in order to reduce their susceptibility to stray electromagnetic signals.

2.0 SCOPE

This specification applies to the application of EMI control coatings to spaceflight and spaceflight-related hardware fabricated under the authority of JSC.

3.0 USAGE

This process specification shall be called out on the engineering drawing by identifying the surface(s) to be coated and using a drawing note with the following general format:

**APPLY EMI CONTROL COATING, THICKNESS = x mm,
PER NASA/JSC PRC-4003, CLASS z**

The material callout shall be in accordance with Section 8.0, MATERIAL REQUIREMENTS. Coating thickness tolerance shall be +10%.

The "class" descriptor shall conform to one of the following definitions:

- Class 1 Coating properties must be verified by test
- Class 2 Coating properties do not require verification by test

4.0 DEFINITIONS

Electromagnetic Interference (EMI): The emission of electromagnetic radiation (radio waves and the like) signals that have the potential for interfering with the operation of unrelated electronic hardware. A common example is noise on a television screen from

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the operation of a vacuum cleaner. Most commercial electronic hardware emits electromagnetic radiation at levels well above that permitted for spacecraft flight hardware.

5.0 RECORDS, REPORTS, AND FORMS

Standard manufacturing records, reports and forms shall be used. Records of personnel qualified to perform EMI control coating shall be maintained in accordance with SLP 4.18. The results of all coating inspection and adherence tests shall be documented in the part quality records.

6.0 SAFETY PRECAUTIONS AND WARNING NOTES

Toxic and flammable solvents are used in this process. Appropriate safety precautions shall be documented in the detailed process instructions for implementing this process specification.

7.0 REFERENCES

The following references were used to develop this process specification:

SOP-007.1 Preparation and Revision of Process Specifications

JSC 8500C Engineering Drawing System Requirements

The following documents are called out as an extension of the requirements given in this specification:

JHB 5322.1 Contamination Control Requirements Manual

JSC SLP 4.18 Training

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8.0 MATERIALS REQUIREMENTS

Specific/special tools, equipment, and materials shall be documented in the detailed process instructions for implementing this process specification.

9.0 PERSONNEL TRAINING AND CERTIFICATION

Personnel performing coating and quality control activities shall be adequately trained for EMI control coating processes. Training shall involve each technician successfully coating at least three Class 1 test coupons for each Detailed Process Instruction (DPI) that addresses EMI control coatings.

10.0 PROCEDURE

10.1 Pot Life of Coating Solutions

Catalyzed coating mixtures (or solutions) shall not be used if excessive curing has occurred. Approved DPI's shall provide guidelines to prevent the violation of the coating compound's maximum allowable pot life.

10.2 Environmental Conditions

All operations connected with surface coating shall be conducted in an area maintained at a temperature of 24 ± 5 °C with a relative humidity not exceeding 60 percent, unless otherwise indicated by an approved detailed process instruction. The application and curing must be performed in a Controlled Work Area (CWA) as defined in JHB 5322.1. Special precautions must be taken to preclude contamination of surfaces before coating.

10.3 Substrate Cleanliness Requirements

All substrate surfaces shall be visibly clean and free of oils and grease prior to coating. Cleaned parts shall be handled only with clean, white, cotton, lint-free gloves.

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10.4 Mixing of Coating Solution

Coating solutions should be mixed immediately before use. Unused coating mixtures may be stored for future use. However, they shall not be reused if excessive curing has occurred. Excessive curing of catalyzed coating mixtures (solutions) is considered to have occurred when more than one-third of the surface of the stirrer used to mix the fluoroelastomeric solution is covered with solid particles or lumps immediately prior to coating.

10.5 Coating Application and Cure

Class 1 coatings shall be applied by spraying the coating solution on the substrate at a known flow rate in such a manner that the applied thickness may be reasonably controlled. All other coatings shall be applied either by brushing or spraying. The coating thickness tolerance shall be +10%. Coatings may be built up by using multiple passes or coats. Each pass or coat shall be allowed to dry sufficiently in order to preclude the trapping of excess solvents between individual passes or coats.

Precautions shall be taken to ensure that newly applied coatings are sufficiently dried before being handled.

11.0 VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

11.1 Test Coupons (Class 1 only)

Two test coupons of the same substrate material shall be coated by the same procedure used for the actual hardware, immediately prior to coating the hardware. The same batch of coating material shall be used for both the test coupons and the actual hardware. The test coupon coating thickness shall be the same as that for the actual hardware.

11.2 Coating Appearance

The appearance of the coatings shall be visibly smooth and continuous without discoloration or excessive (i.e., more than 5%) "cratered" or "spackled" textures.

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11.3 Thickness of Coating (Class 1 only)

The thickness of the coating applied to test coupons shall be verified to satisfy the requirements of Section 3.0, USAGE, by means of a micrometer or other measuring device.

11.4 Coating Adherence (Class 1 only)

The adherence of the coating on the test coupons shall be tested according to the following test method:

- a. Apply the coating to the substrate and allow to dry as specified in the applicable Detailed Process Instruction.
- b. Make two parallel scratches, 3.0 cm (1.2 inch) apart, through the coating to the substrate with a sharp instrument.
- c. Immediately apply a 2.5 cm (1.0 inch) wide strip of adhesive masking tape (Code No. 250, 3M Corp.; shelf life not to exceed 6 months) across the two scratches. Press the tape tightly and uniformly against the surface of the coating.
- d. Remove the tape with one quick motion.
- e. Coating adherence shall be acceptable if the coating does not visibly become separated from the substrate

The coating on the ABS substrate coupon must adhere to the ABS substrate surface according to engineering adhesion requirements specified above.

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