

ASK THE EXPERT

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SPFA gets calls regularly from customers, designers, architects and others looking for straight answers to their questions on SPF. Here is a question received recently that our panel of experts addressed:



What do I need to mask off when spraying foam inside a building? What techniques, tools and procedures should I use for masking and trimming?

Industry best practices recommend that any item within the building that is not to be sprayed with foam, be protected against overspray or removed from the spray area.

For example, in an attic you might find boxes, garment bags, sporting or hunting equipment, rugs, furniture and other objects. These should be removed from the spray area.

Items that can't be moved and, therefore, masked include: pipes, lighting fixtures, vents, HVAC equipment and ductwork, electric boxes and receptacles and floors. It is not typical to mask roof joists, beams, rafters, or trusses unless they will be exposed to the interior living spaces.

Tape, rolls of construction paper, polyethylene and aluminum foil make

good masking materials. Use masking materials that will stay in place during the spray operations, but are easily removed. Sometimes that might mean using a painters tape with a roll of construction masking paper. Other times you might need to use a strong PVC duct tape and 4-6 polyethylene plastic.

Consider also how difficult the item is to mask. A good masking material for odd shaped items close to the spray surface is aluminum foil. The foil can mold itself around the object, minimizing and simplifying the masked area.

Rules for Masking

1. Move items that can be moved.
2. Mask items that can't be moved.
3. Mask only objects and areas you do not want foam on, do not mask into



This cluttered attic was a challenge to mask (above), but the applicator was able to keep overspray off everywhere except where the foam was specified. On the other hand, this applicator (below) decided to just spray without overspray protection. While the foam quality was good, the client questioned the workmanship based on the overspray.



Tape, paper and plastic are the most common masking materials.

the space where the foam is supposed to be.

4. Use materials that can be easily removed, while still providing adequate overspray protection.
5. Use a chalk line or straight edge when masking a straight line along a wall, floor or ceiling.

Trimming

Once the foam is sprayed, the masking material needs to be removed and the excess foam trimmed. Using the right tools can make this job much easier. The following tools have been used by contractors to trim foam.

Foam trimmers: Foam trimmers can be used to cut foam down to a specific thickness. Typically, they are used when installing drywall, plaster or other material that requires a specific thickness over the foam.

Cutting: Most sprayfoam jobs require the foam to be cut around protrusions and penetrations such as pipes, electrical fixtures, vents, etc. The following tools can be used effectively for cutting the foam: reciprocating saw, keyhole saw, folding saw, stiff bladed knife (closed cell foam) and long bladed knife (open cell foam).

Prying and scraping: The following tools can effectively remove foam from stud faces, floors and other surfaces: stiff floor scraper, pry bar, short handled scraper, hooked pry bar, flat scraper, hooked scraper and wire brushes to clean studs.



Clean up and foam particle containment: Sprayfoam trimming creates thousands of small lightweight particles that are hard to corral. The following tools can help clean up lightweight foam dust and particles: negative pressure fan, combination vacuum and foam mulcher, vacuums, push brooms and standard brooms.

Also, when using plastic to cover a floor from overspray, the plastic can be cut into sections and used as the trash bag. ○

MAKING MONEY!

Controlling expenses is as critical to profit as getting the estimate right and making the sale, but how do you know if you're making money and on what kind

Correction: In the ASK THE EXPERT column in the previous issue of *SPRAYFOAM Professional*, the authors were the members of SPFA's Consultant Committee: Mason Knowles, Roger Morrison, Phil Robarge, John Hatfield and Rob Smith.



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