



# The Facts About Glitsa

## Fact or Fable?

By Duane Bartel, President, Glitsa American – Part four of four

### False Statements about Glitsa:

From time to time some interesting fibs and fables make their way to me from the field, particularly about our Swedish finishes. Some originate from long-time industry misinformation; some originate from contractors pushing a different type of finish; and in some cases, individuals simply are acting on preconceived notions and bias. They simply may not know better. The following are some examples of false statements that get thrown around about Glitsa.

1. **Glitsa is banned in some states**
2. **The contractor must wear a respirator when applying Glitsa, but not when applying a waterbase**
3. **Glitsa will cause cancer**
4. **Glitsa is toxic, but waterbase is non-toxic**
5. **Your house will burn down if Glitsa is used**
6. **The smell won't go away**

**M**y answer to the first comment is that it is simply false. Glitsa is not banned in any state. There is no ban, regulation, law, etc., that applies only to Glitsa. There is a national architectural coatings regulation that applies to all architectural coatings. Also, a few states have their own architectural coatings regulations that may be more stringent than the federal regulation. Glitsa chooses not to distribute its Swedish finishes into New Jersey and the New York City Metro area because our Swedish finish voc levels exceed their voc limits and we do not manufacture in containers smaller than quarts. Glitsa Swedish finishes can be purchased and applied everywhere else whether in quarts, gallons or five-gallon pails.

Regarding the next two comments, answers to these are covered in the fall

2001 Swedish Edition newsletter in “The Facts About Glitsa, Part 3”. Merits of Swedish finish versus waterbase coatings and toxicity issues are covered extensively. A fact to consider is that all coatings are toxic to one degree or another.

Finally, one answer addresses all the other statements mentioned above. Follow the instructions, use common sense and none of these concerns should be an issue. If the guidelines in the instructions are followed, the fumes will dissipate and the odor will diminish quickly and completely. The better the ventilation is, the faster this dissipation will occur. Solvents always evaporate. They do this because they have a higher vapor pressure relative to the surrounding air. Therefore, they have to dissipate in order for the air to achieve equilibrium in

accordance with fundamental rules of fluid dynamics. What remains at this point is the cured coating, which is all resin. It will have no odor.

Regarding flammability, there are many products and tools on a jobsite that could cause a house to burn down. Yet, such occurrences are rare because contractors generally exercise safety precautions. The key to a safe jobsite is following the instructions and using common sense whether the contractor is using a tool or applying a coating. Flammability is a function of two things: A source of ignition is required and an inadequately ventilated, concentrated accumulation of vapors must exist. The risk is eliminated by not allowing an ignition source and by ventilating well at the earliest opportunity (taking drying into account).

A homeowner recently asked me if there was a floor coating she could use on her mahogany strip entry that was completely non-toxic.

I told her the only one that came to mind was air. There is



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not a coating that exists that is completely non-toxic. In fact, nearly everything in nature is toxic to some degree. Mahogany itself has a very interesting toxic quality. It is in a class of cyanogenetic plants that, when sawed, milled or sanded, emits naturally occurring cyanide in the form of a gas and in its dust. Of course this is not any reason not to use mahogany, lots of woods have similar toxic qualities. Obviously, this wood is not dangerous to the contractor or homeowner if the professional is aware of the hazards and exercises good safety procedures.

It is no different with coatings. With any kind of floor coating there are safety procedures to be followed. If the contractor follows these, he can rest assured that he is safe and the homeowner will be safe.

To consider what constitutes health risks, instead of concentrating solely on toxicity, a better measure of risk should be hazard. Hazard takes into account both toxicity and dose-time relationships. Dose-time is a measure of both exposure quantity and exposure time.

Some examples of examining hazard risks: Table salt is generally not viewed as particularly hazardous, it is a natural, common, low toxicity substance. Yet, just two tablespoons would be a lethal dose for a one-year old child. Similarly, water has extremely low toxicity, yet drinking it

in copious amounts can cause enough sodium depletion to cause a cascade effect in the body as cells literally drown. In excess, it can also trigger a heart attack. What keeps the hazard low for both of these substances in our everyday lives is that we generally have enough common sense to use them in reasonable amounts over reasonable time periods that limits our “exposure”.

An example of hazards at the other extreme, are high toxicity substances in very low doses. You may have enjoyed snacking on wild black cherries, sometimes found in health food stores. Just like

ancing a highly toxic substance against very small doses.

The risk is not specifically a matter of toxicity levels, it is balanced by keeping the time-dose relationship within safe limits. With virtually all products, regardless of toxicity, following the manufacturers instructions and exercising common sense can achieve the hazard risk balance. And as always, when in doubt, call the manufacturer.

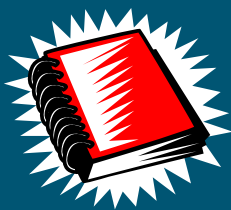
Many factors drive the misinformation we experience about products in the marketplace. Glitsa product labels list stringent warnings. They are warnings of

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mahogany in the example above, they are a natural source of cyanide, which also can exist as a liquid, not just a gas. Cyanide is extremely toxic, but the dose in this example is extremely small, keeping the hazard low. In a less savory example, some South American missionaries make a habit of routinely taking minute doses of deadly strychnine poison in order to remain free from intestinal worms. Once again, the hazard is minimized by bal-

what can happen if safety precautions are not taken. Every manufacturer has latitude on the severity of warnings they list on their product labels, Glitsa American has always chosen to list full warnings and precautions for the safety of their users. By heeding these warnings, following the instructions and exercising common sense, the contractor can achieve a safe work environment for himself and a safe living environment for the homeowner. ■

## References:



If you are curious to check out these observations on your own, I invite you to read some very enlightening books that are well written and informative. Regarding regulatory agencies, how they set hazard limits and the promulgation of junk science within these agencies and the media, I suggest [Junk Science Judo](#) by Steven J. Milloy. Regarding media bias and the way it slants the truth, I recommend [Bias](#) by former CBS journalist Bernard Goldberg. All other references to toxicity ratings, doses and chemical characteristics in this article are derived from the following: [Deadly Doses; A Writer's Guide to Poisons](#) by Serita Deborah Stevesn, RN, BSN with Anne Klarner, and [The Dose Makes The Poison, Second Edition, A Plain-Language Guide to Toxicology](#), by M. Alice Ottoboni, Phd.