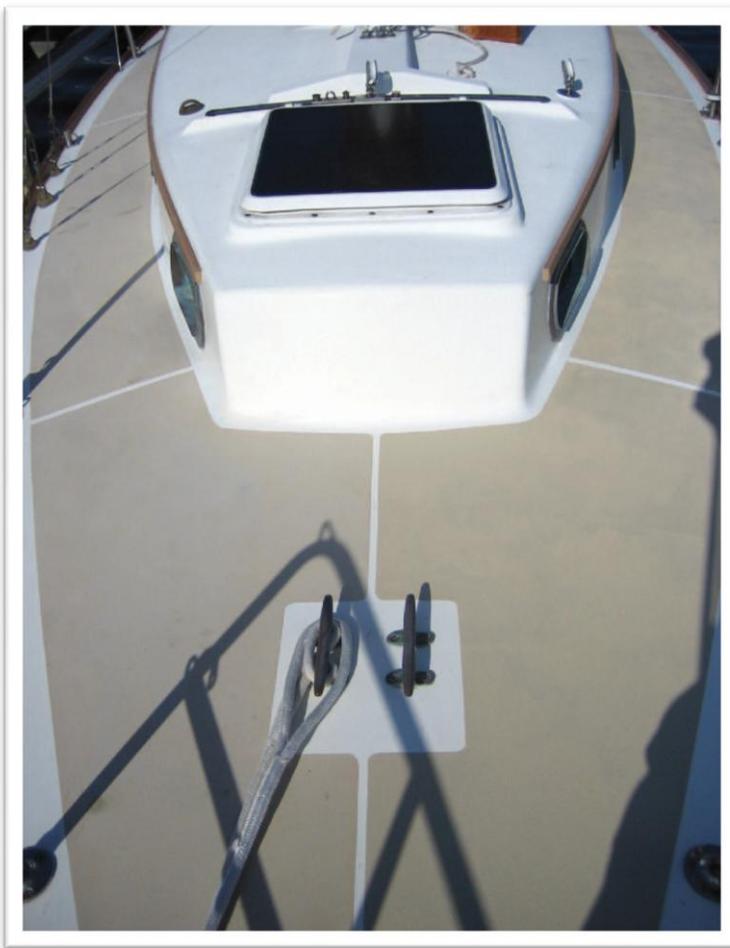


softsand[®] Case Study

Boat Modification — New Non-Skid Deck Finish

by Bob Emmons (article published in CDSOA's Masthead, Sept/Oct 2007. Reprinted with permission)

A newly renovated non-skid deck is one job that, for a moderate bit of effort, the results are big! My boat, a 1981 CD30, had a deck with some gel coat crazing (surface hairline cracks), stains, and most important of all was lacking in non-skid in critical areas. The cockpit sole and the boarding gate area surfaces were quite smooth, due to years of use. This was on my list of renovation projects for quite a few years, and this summer I finally scheduled this project and I'm happy to report on the results.



First, I wanted to find a product that I liked for the non-skid properties. The past couple of years I visited boat show booths, and researched on the internet to find my choice. Some manufacturers have non-skid particles premixed in their paint, but personally, I did not like the size of the particles or the type of particle in use for the samples I examined. I realized that for this custom job, I needed to decide on my deck paint and then add the non-skid particles that I liked to the freshly painted surface. In this way, I could control the type and the amount of non-skid, and still get the paint that I wanted. Also, color was an issue. I wanted to keep my Cape Dory beige color close to the existing color because I liked how it looked. I decided on using Interlux[®] BrightSide[®], a one-part polyurethane paint. I have used both the one-part and two-part paints, and decided that for this job, which would be completed in the summer's sun, portions at a time, and in the interest of ease of use, that the one-part polyurethane was the paint of choice for this project. However, I could not find a color to match the existing boat deck, so I experimented by buying a couple of quarts of beige and decided to mix them. I got lucky and found that

a 50/50 mix of Interlux's Grand Banks Beige and Bristol Beige is an almost exact match to the original paint on my Cape Dory!

In regard to the non-skid particles, I wanted to try a softer rubber particle that would give me a superb non-skid. I also wanted to be able to kneel on my boat deck to varnish the teak with a measure of comfort so that

I'm not getting skin abrasion therapy. I found some particles (used for truck bed liners) to be oversized and downright obnoxious for our beautiful pleasure craft, and some to be the opposite; too small for a good grip when you really need it in a seaway. After examining the samples I got from the internet stores, I chose a product called Soft Sand. The company, SoftPoint Industries, is based in Copley, OH, and specializes in manufacturing rubberized particles just for non-skid use. Their particles have color pigment throughout and are not made like other manufacturers from recycled car tires. I chose the beige particle in a medium grade for size. At home, to be sure of the final result, I experimented on a scrap piece of hardboard, with the paint and particles, and I was quite satisfied with the sample.

The weather forecast looked good for the next couple of days, so on with the job! To prepare the decks for epoxy filler and new paint, I thoroughly cleaned the deck with Simple Green, a degreaser. I then wiped the deck surface with a rag soaked in Interlux's Fiberglass Solvent Wash 202. Any similar degreaser or solvent cleaner would do, and be sure to wear protective gloves for your skin. To fill in any hairline cracks and imperfections in the surface I used system, simply wiping it in with a latex-gloved finger. Since the cracks were so small, no filler additives were needed in the epoxy.

The next day, after the epoxy cured, I then power sanded the deck surface with a coarse 80 grit, and blew off the dust with my yard blower. After another wipe with solvent cleaner I then taped the non-skid area, using the 1" wide and 2" wide (for corners) blue painters tape. This was the most time-consuming of all of the steps, especially cutting the rounded corners. I used a circle template to help outline the 2" wide tape before cutting the corners. After the masking tape was down, the easy part remained of placing the finish on. I painted in sections of approximately 3 linear feet because the paint was setting up quickly in the heat and I wanted the non-skid particles to sit in the paint. For the non-skid placement I decided on the "broadcast" method instead of mixing the particles in the paint. The broadcast method requires you to shake the particles on the painted surface out of a container that is similar to a salt dispenser. In this way I could obtain a heavy coat of non-skid particles that I desired. Mixing the particles in the paint is fine also, but will result in a less dense non-skid. Remember, the heavier the coat of non-skid, the more dirt you will tend to gather on deck; but in the interest of safety, I applied the particles liberally and always made sure to board my boat with clean shoes. After broadcasting the particles in the previously painted section, I continued to brush on more polyurethane and then spread the particles.

"The deck looked as if it just came out of the factory!"



Depending on the weather, you would have to monitor the set-up time of the paint, but if it is cool enough, you could do a whole non-skid section at a time. The next day, I vacuumed the remaining non-skid particles not adhered to the paint with a shop vac and applied the second coat of paint. This coat of paint was brushed on slowly over the heavy base coat of non-skid particles. The next day, I removed the tape and what I saw brought such a smile to my face. The deck looked as if it just came out of the factory!

I completed sections of my deck in consecutive days, so that I could step on other parts of the boat. The entire project was in the works for about a week. After 4 months of use, I must say that I am very satisfied with the products that I used and the appearance of my decks. Only time will tell how well the new non-skid will hold up, but I kept some spare paint and Soft Sand particles in my workshop for any touchups if needed. I have sent in some photos of the project although the print quality probably will not justify the beauty of the new deck surfaces, which has to be seen with your own eyes and felt with your own feet!

Bob Emmons, sails "Red Wing" a CD30 out of Toms River, NJ.