

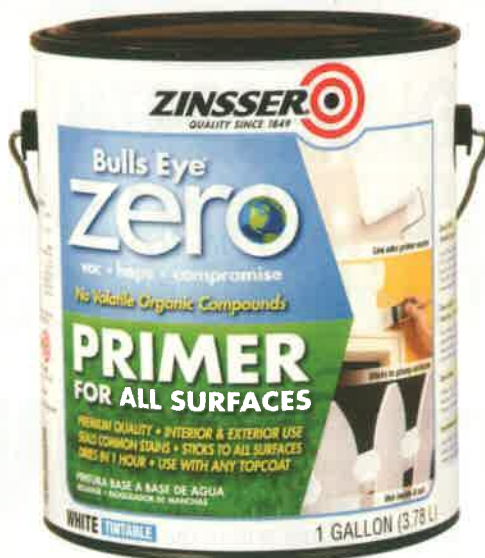
# Green From Top to Bottom

**T**hough your customers may not specifically ask for “green” primers, a new study suggests they will purchase green products if available.

The 2009 National Green Buying Research Study from Green Seal revealed that four out of five people are still buying green products, even in the midst of the recession. Half of the 1,000 consumers surveyed said they are buying just as many green products as before the economic downturn, and 19 percent reported they are buying more. Consumers reported that they aren’t really swayed by green claims: Only 9 percent said green advertising is their primary influencer. Instead, they do their homework by reading the packaging (24 percent) and conducting their own research, usually online (17 percent).

It’s a trend that coatings manufacturers have noticed for some time: Consumers are getting savvier about green products and demanding them, even as low- and no-VOC primers are hitting their stride.

“Paints and coatings have been trending green for a couple of decades now,” said Tim O’Reilly, business manager for Zinsser Primer Brands, and Angela Cunningham, category manager of primers, both under the



● **New from Rust-Oleum’s Zinsser brand is Bulls Eye Zero™.**

Rust-Oleum Corp. umbrella. “Initially these efforts were driven by air-quality regulations; however, in recent years other factors have been driving green formulations.

*New environmentally friendly primers meet consumer demand*

“The creation of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) credits by the Green Building Council, with monetary benefits back to general contractors, has spiked the interest and use of green coatings. Additionally, consumer awareness of air quality and avoidance of harmful

chemicals has given rise to the ‘consumerization’ of green coating formulas,” they said.

Rust-Oleum offers several primers that meet green-building standards under the Zinsser label, including Bulls Eye 1-2-3®, Bulls Eye Water-Base®, Cover Stain Water-Base® and Gardz®.

Consumer awareness and appreciation for green primers wasn’t always a slam-dunk. Decades ago, as coatings manufacturers first started lowering VOCs, consumer confidence in the resulting primers also was low.

The earliest low-VOC primers were a compromise from their higher VOC counterparts, said Ron Boyajian, product marketing manager for California Paints. Yes, they were better for the environment, but their performance in many aspects wasn’t on par with that of conventional products.

As the technology has improved, however, the pendulum has swung the other way. R&D advances in resins and raw materials in general as well as entire colorant systems have led to primers that not only are low- or even

no-VOC but also have excellent hide, durability, adhesion and moisture resistance.

"The coatings are superior even to conventional products," Boyajian said. What's more, consumers have proven green primers for themselves, which has buoyed demand. "Consumer awareness is growing—absolutely," he added.

Jeff Spillane, senior marketing manager for Benjamin Moore & Co., agreed that yesteryear's primers were not the same quality as those today. For instance, low-VOC products took a longer time to cure. But as new and improved primers moved into the market, consumers proved for themselves



● The low-VOC ELEMENTS line from California Paints includes primers.

*"We made a commitment to go as low as we could on VOCs, everywhere we could."*

that the products worked, and demand picked up.

Spillane said the auto industry is going through the same demand cycle even now. "Look at the Toyota Prius. Many consumers think it's not as good as a Camry. It may be better for the environment, but does it have the get up and go? Will the battery work? These are questions people ask," Spillane said, suggesting that these products, too, will have to be tested and proven by consumers.

Primers are further ahead in the cycle, to the point that some are popular specifically for their green properties.

Pittsburgh Paints has an entire line of Seal Grip primers with two products that feature VOCs of less than 100 grams per liter. They include the company's best-selling interior/exterior Seal Grip 100% Acrylic Universal Primer/Sealer and the latex interior Seal Grip Enamel Undercoater. Certain green features contribute to the first product's popularity, such as its low odor, and "make it an ideal whole house primer for residential and commercial applications," said Lauren

Moore, product manager for the Residential Repaint Segment.

The company additionally has a no-VOC primer within the PPG Pure Performance line, which has been a category leader since it was introduced in 2001.

"With Pure Performance, you don't have to sacrifice quality for being green, as the paint also features superior adhesion, excellent enamel hold-out, low spatter, moisture resistance and a fast drying time," Moore said. "Using Pure Performance lets you paint today and occupy the room tonight."

The demand for green primers also is growing with professional customers—especially those who in sensitive settings such as hospitals and schools. As a result, one system that is gaining for Insl-X is NO4000 Odorless Alkyd Stain Killer. The product uses a special resin technology that allows for solvents that are virtually stripped of objectionable odors.

According to Insl-X, as every year goes by, more painting professionals are gravitating toward "go-to" prod-

ucts like NO4000 that they can trust and that meet their expectations.

### How Low Can You Go?

Producing top-performing green primers is no easy feat, although their proliferation on the market would make you think otherwise.

Among the newer primers are two from XIM Products Inc. Dick Hardy, president, said one challenge primer manufacturers faced, as VOC limits went lower and lower, was maintaining the product's stability in extreme temperatures without adding traditional levels of propylene glycol. XIM answered the challenge with Peel Bond®, a high-build water-based bonding primer-sealer, and Trim Magic™, introduced last year.

Peel Bond has a VOC content of less than 100 grams per liter and is designed to bond to and fill in rough, profiled surfaces. Trim Magic is an extension of the Peel Bond family of products and has an even thicker, 50-percent higher solids content. Both products "use newer technology to allow the latex polymer to have freeze-thaw stability while still being low in VOCs," Hardy said.

California Paints, meanwhile, has several new green products, including



● Pittsburgh Paints offers SealGrip 100% Acrylic Universal Primer/Sealer.

a new zero-VOC tinting system. The company worked with its colorant supplier in Europe to produce the system, which was launching at press time with



● **Smart Prime is the next generation in primer technology from Zinsser.**

a full range of colors. “When you add conventional colorants to a can of no-VOC paint, it’s no longer no-VOC,” said Boyajian, noting that the tinting system solves this problem.

California Paints additionally has launched two zero-VOC product lines with complementary primers: ELE-

MENTS, a high-end line of premium-performance coatings that includes everything from basecoats to ceiling paint; and ENVIROTECH, a more competitive line with the same broad product offering. According to Boyajian, primers in the two lines are durable, don’t compromise on adhesion and offer better scrubability and moisture resistance than their more conventional counterparts. “They’re almost bullet-proof,” he said.

California Paints has pulled out the stops in merchandising the environmental friendliness of the lines. ELEMENTS, for example, features a green-driven slogan—“The greener alternative in paint for your homes”—as well as an image of a tropical tree frog that Boyajian has nicknamed “Rebate,” as a play on words for “rib-bit.”

ELEMENTS already is doing well, said Boyajian who gives credit to his independent dealers in guiding customers through the initial sales. “We

have a dealer who actually took Rebate and had a decal made that he put on the front and back of his delivery vehicle. This is a guy who took the product line and was so sold on it ... he was raving about it,” he said.

Boyajian noted that with these three introductions, California Paints jumped



● **Masterchem offers KILZ Clean Start™ with zero VOCs.**

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● **ENVIROTECH from California Paints is another low-VOC option.**

“whole hog” into no-VOC formulation. “We made a commitment to go as low as we could on VOCs, everywhere we could,” he said. “We felt that if we pushed the green issue, it would put us in a good position, and it has. It’s paid off in spades.”

Masterchem Industries also has seen

*“Recently, we’ve seen an increase in demand for high-quality water-based primers.”*

advantages in pushing the green issue—and the advantages recently were borne out by a company survey. The survey of more than 1,000 DIY consumers across the United States and Canada, as well as 300 professional contractors, showed there is a growing awareness about VOC levels in paint and primers among these end users, reported Jason Long, KILZ brand manager.

Masterchem in February launched a new zero-VOC water-based primer, called KILZ Clean Start™, that affords the same performance as other primers under the KILZ label. Besides sealing the surface and blocking stains, it also offers a mildew-resistant finish.

The company’s best-selling primer is KILZ®2, an interior water-based primer,

stain-blocker and sealer. Traditionally, professionals have preferred oil-based primers for their surface penetration. However, “Recently we’ve seen an increase in demand for high-quality, water-based primers like KILZ® Premium, which is rapidly growing in popularity with our customers,” Long said.

“We take our role as corporate citizens very seriously and continue to evaluate the performance of every primer in our product line to ensure we’re creating products that fit our customers’ needs while being as gentle on the environment as possible,” he added.

**Other Green Launches**

Another new no-VOC primer is Zinsser’s Smart Prime, which has oil-

based characteristics in a water-based formulation.

“Smart Prime is our ‘next generation’ in primer technology as the first water-based primer to actually block water stains, eliminating the need to use an oil base to block stains and reducing VOCs dramatically,” O’Reilly and Cunningham said. “It can be used inside or out to block stains from water, nicotine, smoke and tannin bleed where water-based stain-blocking primers tend to fail.”

Smart Prime is launching at the same time as Bulls Eye Zero™, which the company promotes as having “Zero VOCs with ZERO Compromise.” The interior/exterior stain-blocking primer is virtually odorless, sticks to all surfaces and provides a mildew-resistant film. It also dries in one hour and can be used with any topcoat. In many ways, the product is “extreme green,” O’Reilly and Cunningham said.

What’s more, Bulls Eye Zero also features eco-friendly packaging. The gallon is made with 100-percent recycled plastic that also is 100-percent recyclable.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Moore just launched an entire line of no-VOC coatings, including everything from primers to topcoats, called “Natura.”

Spillane noted that the company’s Aura line, introduced three years ago, was touted in the media as being “green”—even though Benjamin Moore positioned Aura, with 50 grams per liter of VOCs, not necessarily as a green but a premium-quality line.

Natura, however, is another story. Benjamin Moore is heavily promoting the green aspects of Natura, “which has the least impact on the environment,” Spillane stated. Natura not only is free of VOCs but also lacks formaldehyde, silica and similar chemicals. It offers many of the same performance characteristics of Aura and uses the same proprietary Genex™ colorant system, which is glycol-free.

Natura is virtually odorless, except for the small odor associated with certain pigments, and this dissipates with-

in a minute or two, Spillane said.

The line began shipping nationwide at the beginning of the year and will be fully launched by May.

“(Merchandising) is going to be easy for us because Natura is better than most paints out there. We can say, ‘You can do something good for your family, for indoor air quality and for the environment. And you don’t have to sacrifice anything... in performance.’” he said.

Primer manufacturers rely on independent dealers to help them deliver the win/win message of their green products and to sort out all of the competing claims.

“How do we get around all the greenwashing of everything that’s out there?” Spillane asked. “Everything is green; everyone has a green spin, and it’s getting worse as the demand goes up.” ■

## Twistin’ the night away... and the mornings and the afternoons and the weekends and...

Dystonia is a disorder of the nervous system that causes muscles to tighten and twist involuntarily. It affects some musicians, accountants, athletes and other people like painters who perform repetitive motions. Dystonia can be very painful and interfere with daily activities. Genetics, trauma, medications and neurological/metabolic conditions can also cause symptoms.



Dystonia patient Joanna Manusov, daughter of Janice Nachbar, VP of Sales, Eastern US for Mr. LongArm, with actor Kirk Cameron, spokesman for the Dystonia Medical Research Foundation

Although most people have never heard of dystonia, it affects more people than better known conditions such as Muscular Dystrophy and ALS (Lou Gehrig’s Disease). Experts estimate that there are over 300,000 people in North America with dystonia. One third of them are children.

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