

National Gallery of Art Uses Fiberlock Products for Lead Problem

Contractor: Ballard and Associates, Inc.

Distributor: Aramsco

Products Used: Fiberlock L-B-C® Lead Barrier Compound and FixALL Fix Rust Primer

Focus Issues: The National Gallery of Art (NGA) in Washington, DC is one of the country's most distinguished museums. Each year over five million people visit the gallery to view the world-famous exhibits that it houses. In 1996, the entire skylight system in the museum's attic was replaced. Called a Laylight, the skylights serve as one of the only sources of natural light to the museum and the exhibits below. Once the project began taking shape and the skylights were removed and replaced, it quickly became apparent that the surrounding area in the attic was in poor condition. Dingy, chipping paint on brick walls, and rust on I-beams and metal window frames were now even more obvious with the installation of new, clean skylights. However, the dirt and grime was the least of the gallery's problems — the area was also found to be contaminated with lead-based paint. Over 200,000 square feet of walls, ceilings, windows, skylights, and steel support beams for the skylight system in the attic needed to be abated.

Challenges: The unique style of construction found in the museum's attic would have made it virtually impossible to chemically remove all of the lead-based paint from the intricate architecture. Plus, the cost of complete removal would have been astronomical. A more cost-effective and simpler solution had to be found.

Solutions: The NGA wanted the safest, fastest, and most economical solution available. Encapsulation was found to be the only practical method of abatement for the museum's requirements. The gallery sought the help of Ballard and Associates, Inc., an abatement contractor based in Fairfax, Virginia, who, in turn, recommended Fiberlock Technologies, the manufacturer of the premier lead-based paint encapsulant L-B-C® Lead Barrier Compound. Ballard and NGA selected the encapsulant because it meets all ASTM standards, is UL® classified, and has been independently tested and certified by DL Laboratories. L-B-C also needed to be custom matched to the color Polar White in order to meet the strict color requirements of the gallery.

Time & Cost Savings: Since this project was completed more than 20 years ago, we asked one of the nation's foremost industrial painting contractors to evaluate savings of encapsulation versus removal for this project in today's dollars. Taking into account the intricacies of the steel, the difficulty of access, and the sensitivity of the client, our contractor estimated at least \$25 per sq. ft. for removal by hand. That is \$10 more per sq. ft. than the typical general estimate cited by EPA. More importantly, the contractor was confident encapsulation in today's dollars would yield a cost savings of no less than 30% and could cut the overall project time nearly in half.

Results: Application of the encapsulant ran smoothly and was completed by hand with a brush and roller in just 2 coats. The only areas that needed to be prepped before L-B-C could be applied were the rusted metal surfaces. Fiberlock recommended FixALL Fix Rust Primer for the prep work, a high quality, corrosion and rust resistant primer. FixALL and Fiberlock are sister brands under ICP Construction. "We're very happy," said John Wimmer, a spokesman for Ballard, regarding the performance of the products.

Project Update: Fiberlock revisited the site two years ago and can proudly say it's in pristine condition, looking just as good as the day it was finished.