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# More than

# BEDLINERS

By Jake Rishavy

**Alternative applications offer spray-on installers a way to boost revenue and diversify in a crowded market.**



Rhino Linings



Various truck beds are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to spray-on applications.

Rhino Linings

In the business world, diversification is hailed as a vital tool to shield an organization from market volatility. In today's spray-on bedliner market, where competition is growing stiffer by the week, that level of protection is valued as much as anywhere.

Today, even the most successful spray-on installers are looking for more ways to use the equipment and know-how they already possess to create additional sources of revenue for their shop.

Bharat Naik, director of technical services for San Diego, Calif.-based Rhino Linings, says it only makes sense to do so.

"These dealers or installers have invested in equipment and training on how to apply a protective lining, not just a bedliner in a truck," he says. "Especially in this country, truck beds have been a great market. But if installers can find other uses for this technology, they can generate additional revenue without having to invest more capital into equipment or training."

Many of these alternative profit centers—including industrial and residential flooring, marine markets, and many others—can be an easy addition to the work bedliner installers are already doing. Some even tend to present themselves, as opposed to being actively pursued by installers.

But, regardless of which markets they expand into, many if not all installers will likely find it useful to diversify in coming years, says John Becker of DynaLiner, Palmer, Mass.

"The reality is that in the next few years, a certain number of spray-on bedliner installers will be moving out of the business," he says. "Some [installers will move away from the truck market] because they've found other applications that can make them just as much or more money. Others will be out of business because of either regulatory concerns, safety issues or market saturation. Regardless, the smart business never puts all its eggs in one basket."



Dynaliner

Dynaliner

Alternative markets for bedliner materials allow installers to use the skills they already have to generate new business, with new customers.

### Alternative Applications

According to Rick Christopher of Santa Ana, Calif.-based LINE-X, the nature of today's spray-on bedliner material allows for many other applications both inside and outside of the automotive realm.

"It's just the nature of the product itself," he says. "The material has a textured finish, and it stops rust and corrosion and protects against impacts. Those properties can be effectively applied to a variety of other applications."

Within automotive markets, the product can be applied to additional areas of the vehicle beyond just the truck bed, including wheel wells, running boards, grilles and the front portion of hoods to protect from bugs and road debris, he says.

Those same applications can be marketed toward construction companies, agricultural markets, as well as to RVs and many kinds of trailers, he adds.

The product's anti-corrosive qualities make it a good fit for marine applications like personal watercraft and boat hulls and the trailers used to transport them, he says, and the textured surfaces can be utilized as a non-slip surface for docks and landing ramps.

Mark Baum of Volatile Free, Brookfield, Wis., agrees that the materials themselves are versatile in their applications, noting some materials can be ordered in different formulations tailored to specific purposes.

"Polyurea itself is a very versatile coating," he says. "It can be used in a lot of different places just by adjusting the raw materials for different properties. Because the truck bedliner market itself is getting

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Many of these new profit centers can be an easy addition to the work bedliner installers are already doing.



Reflex



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Truck beds aren't the only part of a vehicle that can benefit from bedliner material. Grilles, fenders, running boards, van floors and vehicle hoods are all easy applications.



Dynaliner



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Porches, decks and ramps are a great source of additional revenue for those shops that have mobile capabilities.



Dynaliner

so saturated with different products and installers, the guy who wants to excel in this environment will want to start expanding into new areas to stay profitable. And there are a lot of other areas that they can branch out into."

Baum notes that within automotive applications, many installers are applying liner material to the underbody of vehicles for its sound-deadening products, and to just about any part of a four-wheel drive vehicle for impact protection.

"4x4 shops are dismantling entire vehicles in some cases, putting it everywhere just to protect the metal," he says. "That's something that has been done more in the past few years."

Baum adds that some bedliner installers have chosen to make an additional investment and purchase a compressor, generator and trailer to effectively offer their service on a mobile basis. That, he says, allows them to pursue jobs covering cement walkways, commercial and residential basements, and floors and decks, among others.

"By going mobile, an installer is going to have more of an array of possible busi-

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*More than*  
**BEDLINERS**

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LINE-X

The marine market—including boats, trailers, personal watercraft and even docks—is another source of opportunity.



LINE-X



Spraying a truck for a contracting company, for example, can lead to additional jobs.



Rhino Linings

Spraying stairways offers both aesthetic benefits and wear-resistance.



Rhino Linings



LINE-X

Even horse trailers can benefit from the anti-corrosive and non-slip qualities of polyurethane linings.

ness," says Baum. "He's going to be able to go out and find the jobs that can't come to him. The installer might do foundations of homes. Or, some bigger companies have equipment like box crushers or garbage crushers that sit outside and rust up. That equipment can be sprayed to allow that machinery to last longer."

Rhino Linings' Naik notes that installers are generally advised to look at serving as many varied markets as possible.

"Our dealers look at our lining from a solutions point of view," he says. "We offer not a spray-on bedliner, but a solution to corrosion, abrasion, impact and chemical exposure. If you view it as an answer to a problem in those areas, then you begin to look around and see a lot of different applications that need those solutions."

Gary Langeman, president of Reflex Truck Linings, Leamington, Ont., notes that while installers are encouraged to search out as many additional markets as possible for their product, in many cases the customers themselves will find an installer and inquire about non-automotive applications.

"There are just so many specialty applications for this type of a coating material—trailers, tow trucks, decks, commercial floors, playground equipment, even military applications," he says. "Our dealers find applications we would never have dreamed of, and those ideas normally come directly from their customers."

"Just about every one of our dealers sprays things other than trucks," he adds. "When people see it on a truck, it brings up the natural question of if we could also make it work on other applications."

### Going Mobile?

While many of these alternative applications can be brought into a shop to be sprayed, many others will tempt shops into taking the aforementioned steps toward offering their services on a mobile basis. The move does, after all, open up a large new world of opportunities.

But going mobile isn't without its challenges, says Naik. To begin with, it will cost both time and money to make that leap.

"Installers have to realize that it does

take a significant investment in both time and money, because you need more training and inevitably will need more equipment," he says. "In your shop, you control the environment—the timing, the people, the weather. When you go mobile, you're much more at the whim of other factors.

You're going out and doing things in an uncontrolled setting."

With that uncontrolled setting can come additional safety-related issues as well, and some systems operate more safely in uncontrolled environments than others.

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LINE-X

One of the more interesting alternative uses for bed-liner materials is shown here: the product can be used as a bomb blast deterrent on state and federal buildings.



LINE-X

In order to target these additional markets—including flooring, secondary containment systems, stairs, decks and roofs—the installer might need additional insurance to protect against unforeseen damage from overspray, depending on the system's specifications.

"If you don't watch where the particles of spray go due to the wind in the area, for instance, they might float or move onto other vehicles or equipment and create a lot of damage," says Naik.

And on top of possible damage to property, a mobile installer needs to also consider the health of any other contractors working in a certain area.

"Now that you're going elsewhere, you've got to worry about other peoples' safety," says Naik. "In your shop, you can control who comes into contact with the material. That's not always the case with the offsite jobs."

DynaLiner's Becker notes that not all bedliner materials are right for every application—a black deck surface, a day of hot sun and swimmers' bare feet don't make a particularly safe combination near a pool, for instance—so installers should always utilize a bit of common sense and the suppliers' guidelines when determining whether or not to perform an installation.

Fortunately, with materials now coming in colored and clear product options, there is almost always an appropriate application for a desired purpose, he says.

When these safety issues are considered and dealt with, the payoff can be great. And whether it's in-house or mobile, having a little more diversification and peace of mind in a crowded marketplace makes a lot of sense.

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Three 3rd Infantry Division soldiers back from Iraq told Congress it's important to continue developing better body armor, but the equipment already fielded is highly effective. From left are Army Sgt. 1st Class Jamie Wells, Sgt. Anthony Dowden, holding the protective plate covered with LINE-X spray material that saved his life in Iraq, and Brig. Gen. Karl Horst. (Photo courtesy of American Forces Press Service—Donna Miles)

Spray-on coatings have also proved effective for protecting military vehicles and maintaining the integrity of walls in government installations.



Rhino Linings

## Spray-On Coatings Provide Soldiers a Fighting Chance

The U.S. military has said *I Want You* to the spray-on linings industry, employing the versatile coatings to protect servicemen and women in the line of duty.

For instance, more than 50,000 soldiers and Marines stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan have been issued ballistic vests containing a new high-tech Small Arms Protective Insert [SAPI] armored plate designed to stop a 7.62-mm round, which is standard AK-47 rifle ammunition.

The SAPI armored plate is covered with LINE-X polyurethane/polyurea coating, the same coating used for a LINE-X spray-on bedliner application, the company says.

Army Sgt. Anthony Dowden can speak to the effectiveness of the personal protection he wore while deployed to Baghdad with the 3rd ID's C Company, 164th Armor. Dowden was standing in the hatch of an M1 Abrams tank making observations during a patrol when a sniper's round hit him in the chest last March.

The bullet was stopped by the LINE-X-coated SAPI inserts in his protective vest. "It felt like one of Mark McGwire's home-run baseballs," Dowden says, referring to the now-retired Oakland A's and St. Louis Cardinals slugger. He was knocked off his feet and fell into the turret, but suffered only a bruised kidney from the blast.

After one night in the hospital, Dowden returned to his unit, and was back on the street conducting patrols within three days of the attack.

Meanwhile, Rhino Linings dealers have applied Rexar™, the company's polyurethane lining for protecting composite armor for vehicles and structures, to hundreds of surfaces domestically and around the world. Rexar can currently be seen in battle zones on Humvees, helicopters, fleet vehicles, radar towers, bridges, airports, helicopter pads, tank skins and more, according to the company.

"The military is looking to Rhino Linings for protection of their vehicles, structures and ultimately the lives of their personnel," notes Pierre Gagnon, president of Rhino Linings USA. "I can't think of a better compliment than the trust of the U.S. military."

Spray-on coatings have also proven effective as a wall coating for facilities that could be the target of terrorist bombings.

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