

2006 • Over a Decade with Dr. Gel • 2017



# Ask

# Dr. Gel

by Dave Weakley



Dave Weakley is the owner of American Boat Restoration and has been helping Northeastern boaters keep their boats in fine trim and good repair for over 40 years.

**"Email me or call me with your questions! I'll be happy to help you out"**

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## "A successful repair is one you cannot see!"

*"Mr. Weakley, I just finished reading your article in Boating On The Hudson Magazine and noticed your offer to answer questions. I have found a lot of conflicting information about the use of Gel-Coat. Even product manufactures seem to vary in what they recommend. I recently made a small repair to my bow with West System epoxy, Interlux 2000E paint, gel-coat with surfacing wax, thinned with Acetone and sprayed with a Preval sprayer.*

*The repair worked fine, although I did get some orange peel. I will probably use a different spray gun next time. Even though the repair worked*

*I like to know the proper way to do things. I later talked to a gelcoat manufacturer tech who said not to use Acetone to thin Gel-Coat, only use patch booster and also not to use a HVLP spray gun. I'm confused after talking to other people that say they spray Gel-Coat with gravity feed (HVLP) spray guns all the time.*

*So my questions are:*

*1- Can you thin Gel-Coat with Acetone? 2- Is it OK to use West System epoxy and Interlux 2000E as a repair under Gel-Coat? 3- Is a gravity feed HVLP gun acceptable or should I look for a different gun? Sincerely, Dave N."*

I called Dave N. and answered his questions;

**1. Acetone-** Absolutely NOT and under NO circumstances should you use acetone to thin gelcoat. It is a cleaning solvent; I use it to clean my equipment.

The use of acetone will breakdown the gelcoat pigment, change the color, cause poor color match, often causes a halo around the repair area and will turn grey over time. In addition it will shorten the stability of the gelcoat and likely cause lack of shine, chalking and fading. Acetone does not evaporate completely causing the cure to be soft and it will not sand and buff well.

**2- Epoxy and Gelcoat-** It is ok to use West System epoxy; a great and wonderful material to use in a repair but you cannot put gelcoat over it. Gelcoat is polyester and you cannot apply gelcoat over epoxy. It does not matter who the manufacture is; it will not work. You cannot apply gelcoat over an epoxy barrier such as Interlux 2000E, Bluewater epoxy barrier or Petit epoxy barrier. You do not need a "primer" over the repair area. Apply the gelcoat directly over the body fillers. Be sure the body fillers are the correct type for the area of the repair. Type of fillers will vary for above and below the water line.

**3- Spray Gun** – The spray gun you need is a 3M all composite gravity fed HVLP in conjunction with the PPS System. There is other equipment I use in conjunction with this system that I demonstrate and teach how to use in my gelcoat repair training classes. In my opinion a Preval sprayer has no use at all in the world of gelcoat repairs. Here's why. The gelcoat would need to be thinned in order to spray it through the Preval. It would require acetone or styrene to be added. Both are not recommended! Both will degrade the gelcoat. Some in the field will say it's ok to use. But if you want a good quality repair do not use either ever. Don't waste your time and money on a Preval! It would not even make a good spritzer for your martini – Its vapors/ gas may cause anesthetic effects and depression of the central nervous system.

Use the recommended 3M system and "Bob's your uncle!"

Dave,

*I just wanted to thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedule to give me the real facts about gel-coat.*

*Your knowledge and expertise cleared up the confusion and misinformation about the product.*

*I think it's important for boaters to understand what gel-coat is and that proper preparation and procedures are required for a successful repair.*

*Education, learning and training should be a life time goal.*

*Thanks again; good health and prosperity to you and your family." Dave.N.*

**Internet Instructional videos and "Forums" do not always have accurate information about how to use Gel-Coat!**

Beware and be careful! Instructional videos are appealing but ALL of the ones I've seen so far are not good guides to how to do successful gelcoat repairs. I actually find many laughable because so called professionals are teaching such wrong and way off base methods. I'd be willing to go "toe to toe" with any of the so called repairers.

I get to redo many of these cob-jobs which end up costing the boat owner more money. If you want to learn how to do repairs correctly take a repair training class and let me educate you. I train men and yes women from all over the country and beyond from Alaska (yes!) to the Bahamas and of all skill levels. I train those already working in the trade who are not getting good repairs and boat owners without any prior experience.

There are no instructions on a can of gelcoat. It may have a label that says "for professional use only". Trust me if you try it on your own it's likely you'll mess it up (polite terms). I get a lot of calls after the fact; "Why is it still tacky? It'll work great as a fly strip!!" "Why did it turn yellow?" "Why doesn't it match?" "How come I can't polish it?" "It's all over my sand paper" "It's dull when I buff it!"





Here is damage on boats we have repaired that would make you scratch your head!

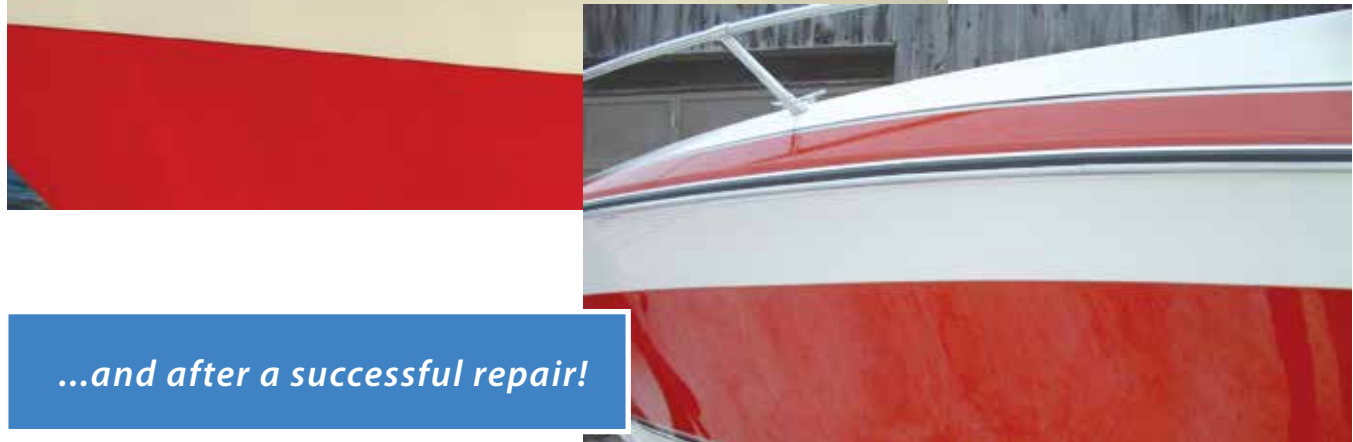
Major dock rash on a body line



"Multi-color" Polyflake on a bass boat



Damage from a post on a dock - before ...



...and after a successful repair!

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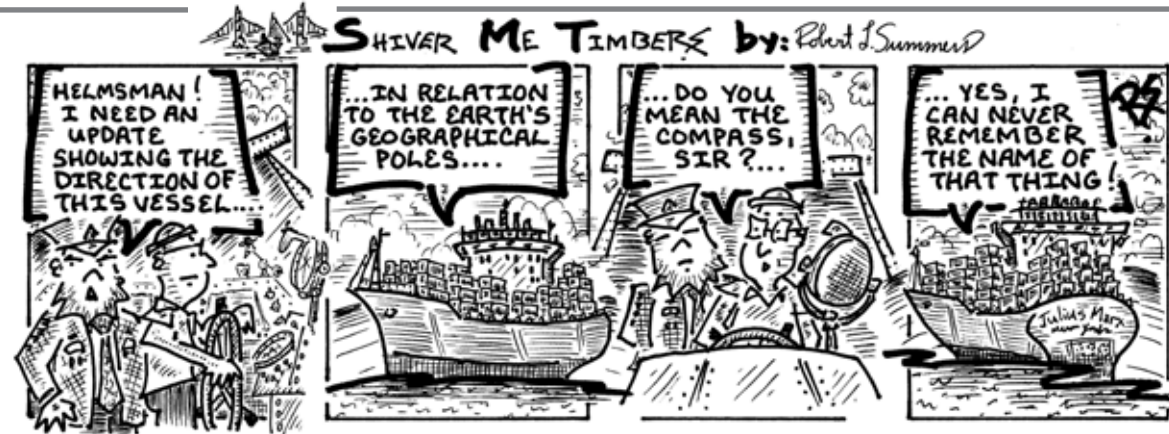
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