



Standard Guide for Determining the Presence of and Removing Microbial (Fungal or Algal) Growth on Paint and Related Coatings¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This guide describes techniques used for determining the presence of fungal or algal growth on paint and related coatings and methods for removal of such growth prior to recoating.

1.2 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Referenced Documents

2.1 ASTM Standards:

D 2022 Test Methods of Sampling and Chemical Analysis of Chlorine-Containing Bleaches²

D 3274 Test Method for Evaluating Degree of Surface Disfigurement of Paint Films by Microbial (Fungal or Algal) Growth or Soil and Dirt Accumulation³

3. Significance and Use

3.1 Microbial growth is a major cause of discoloration and deterioration of paint films. This guide describes techniques used to distinguish fungi and algae from other surface contaminants.

3.2 Repainting a surface contaminated with fungi or algae generally causes more rapid infestation of the new paint than repainting a surface from which fungal or algal growth has been removed. In addition, poor adhesion, staining/bleeding, and many other problems may result. This guide describes methods for removing fungal or algal growth prior to repainting.

NOTE 1—It is extremely important that all steps and notes be read and followed. In particular the washing steps outlined in 5.2.2 and 5.2.4 must be fully carried out, since residual sodium hypochlorite (bleach) can cause many of the same problems, or even loss of coloration after repainting, and residual phosphate detergents can encourage further fungal and algal growth.

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² *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 15.04.

³ *Annual Book of ASTM Standards*, Vol 06.01.

NOTE 2—This procedure is intended for use when recoating the surface. Reports of using this procedure to remove fungi and algae without recoating necessitate inclusion of a warning about the adverse effects of bleach on a coating film. The oxidative effects of bleach can degrade film properties, including particularly the “bleaching” (loss of color) in films containing organic coloring pigments (such as quinacridones, etc.), loss of gloss, chalking, etc. A small patch must be tested prior to use of this procedure for that purpose.

4. Reagents

4.1 *Sodium Hypochlorite*, approximately 5 % aqueous (NaOCl) as commercial household bleach. Because sodium hypochlorite decomposes on exposure to heat and sunlight and becomes ineffective, use only fresh material. See Test Methods D 2022 for methods of sampling and chemical analysis.

4.2 *Phosphate-Free*, non-ammonia-containing detergent or commercial cleaner recommended for washing paint.

5. Procedures

5.1 *Determining the Presence of Fungal or Algal Growth on Paint:*

5.1.1 *Chemical*—Apply a drop of 5 % aqueous sodium hypochlorite solution (common household bleach) to the area suspected of being contaminated with fungal or algal growth. Fungal or algal discoloration will normally bleach within 60 s. Discoloration that does not bleach is probably dirt. For further confirmation do visual and subculture tests.

5.1.2 The following procedures should preferably be used by persons who have had basic microbiological training:

5.1.2.1 *Visual*—Examine the surface using magnification from 10 to 100 \times to distinguish among fungal, algal, or dirt disfigurement in accordance with Test Method D 3274.

5.1.2.2 *Subculture*—Apply a prepared petri dish containing a raised convex surface of nutrient agar culture medium⁴ directly to the surface to be sampled and exert moderate pressure. Replace the cover and incubate for at least 72 h at 95°F (35°C). Examine the agar surface visually as in 5.1.2.1.

NOTE 3—The culture medium must contain the nutrients necessary for growth of algae and fungi.

5.2 *Removal of Fungal and Algal Growth on Paint:*

5.2.1 Wash the surface with a solution of approximately 2 % phosphate-free detergent in water.

⁴ Agar available from various microbiological supply companies.

NOTE 4—The term wash as it is used in 5.2.1 and 5.2.3 is defined as firmly scrubbing the surface with a fully wet sponge or other suitable applicator. Care should be taken to ensure the surface is thoroughly wet with cleaning solution.

5.2.2 Thoroughly rinse the surface with water to remove residual detergent.

5.2.3 Wash the surface with a solution of 1 part by volume of sodium hypochlorite 5 % aqueous solution and 3 parts by volume of water.

NOTE 5—See warnings in Note 1 and Note 2. Also be warned that overspray of bleach can be detrimental to ornamental shrubs, plants or lawn, and can “bleach”, discolor, or otherwise degrade adjacent areas if not adequately protected from exposure. Adequate personal protective equipment should always be used.

NOTE 6—The solution should be allowed to remain on the surface from 10 to 15 min.

NOTE 7—The sodium hypochlorite solution and the 2 % detergent solution may be combined 1:1 by volume in one treatment if desired.

5.2.4 Thoroughly rinse the surface with water to remove residual sodium hypochlorite (see Note 1).

5.2.5 If agreed upon by the parties involved, reinspect the surface in accordance with 5.1 to ensure that there has been adequate removal. Refer to the coating manufacturer’s literature for recommended drying time before recoating.

6. Keywords

6.1 algal; bleach; fungal; microbial; wash

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