Minimize the Risks to Your Property!

Homeowner or Business owner:

Fact: Since 1995, more than 25 fires attributed to hardwood floors have erupted across the state, with at least four occurring in the last year. These fires have resulted in a property loss value of over 1.5 million dollars and present enormous risks to workers and building occupants. (Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health; Massachusetts Legislative Fact Sheet: http://www.masscosh.org/node/55)

What can you do?
Use the following checklists to ensure safe working conditions. Visit www.masscosh.org or call (617) 825-SAFE for further information.

Wood Floor Finishing Consumer Safety Check List

Before Choosing a Contractor
Ask potential contractors to show you flammability information and VOC concentrations for all products.

Confirm that contractor is trained on health and safety.

Contractor completes and posts this Safety Check List.

Health Floor Finishing Project is funded by:
The Toxic Use Reduction Institute of UMass Lowell (TURI)
And a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency
Pre-work Checklist

Preparing for Contractors’ Arrival
Double-check all products are non-flammable (flash points should be above 100°F).
Turn off all pilot lights in the house/business.
Make sure all electricity is OFF and UNPLUGGED. This includes all appliances (furnaces, heaters, air conditioners, refrigerators).
Don’t touch light or electrical switches - they cannot be turned on or off.
Make sure windows and doors are OPEN, allowing fresh air in.
Do not smoke anywhere near worksite.

Contractors Should:
Have a chemical fire extinguisher readily available at worksite.
Place all wood dust or sealed, non-combustible containers such as metal cans OR ensure it’s kept moist.
Keep wood dust away from heat and direct sunlight.
Keep sealer container tightly closed when not used.
Have a water-filled metal container to put rags/steel wool, or other clothes/paper
with the floor sealer on it. Seal container when finished.
Wear:
- long sleeve shirts and pants
- dust/mist respirator
- protective gloves (Nitrile Rubber Gloves)
- protective face shields/glasses
Post “No Smoking” signs at all entrances
**What are Your Alternatives?**

*To minimize risks*, consider alternatives to more harmful floor finishing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Things to Consider</th>
<th>Solvent-Based Finishes</th>
<th>Waterborne Finishes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>Slower dry times; must wait 8-12 hours for next coat</td>
<td>Faster dry times: must wait 2-3 hours for next coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Slower cure times: 50% cured in 3 days, 100% in 30 days</td>
<td>Faster cure times: 90% cured in 3 days, 100% in 7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contractors use 1 more day on job site for 3 coats</td>
<td>Contractors use 1 less day on job site for 3 coats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convenience</strong></td>
<td>Occupants &amp; visitors <strong>must vacate the building for days</strong></td>
<td>Occupants &amp; visitors may immediately return to building</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Costs</strong></td>
<td>Gallon costs $15-$25 To finish 400 square feet: $40 - $50 Save $20 - $150 in materials</td>
<td>Gallon costs $30-$90 To finish 400 square feet: $70 - $200 Spend $20 - $150 more for materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Smell</strong></td>
<td>Strong odor and vapors to deal with</td>
<td>Almost no harmful vapors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Benefits</strong></td>
<td>Less expensive than water-based Requires less skill in the application of the sealer</td>
<td>Causes fewer health problems Much less likely to catch fire Dries quicker, less fumes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have questions about the products being used to finish your floors?

For further information:

1. **Read the container labels.** Manufacturers provide their contact information on their products and will share additional information with you if requested.

2. **Contact Massachusetts Division of Occupational Safety (DOS):**
   - Website: [http://www.mass.gov/dos/consult/index.htm](http://www.mass.gov/dos/consult/index.htm)
   - Boston office: **19 Staniford Street, 2nd Floor**
   - **Boston, MA 02114**
   - Phone: 617-626-6975

3. **Contact Centers for Disease Control & Prevention:** The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health posts chemical hazard information on its website.
   - [http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/)
   - 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636) Customer Service Representatives are available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week in both English and Spanish.

4. **Visit the Toxics Use Reduction Web Site about Healthy Floor Finishing:**
   - [http://www.turi.org/community/grants/further_information/past_projects/categories/floor_finishing](http://www.turi.org/community/grants/further_information/past_projects/categories/floor_finishing)

4. **Do an Internet search:** Chemical’s health effects are easily found using [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) or other internet search engine.

5. **Call 911:** In case of emergency. Using water-based finish will lower the chances of having to use this number!
Letter: Reference Letter

Dear Potential Client:

This letter testifies that this contractor sealed my wood floors and I vouch for the high quality of his/her work. I recommend him/her for your floor-finishing project.

I suggest that you strongly consider using water-based finish rather than oil-based because water-based finish:
- Is much safer – almost no harmful vapors
- Dries quicker so you can immediately re-enter your home or business
- Is much less likely to catch on fire – see attached list of preparation needed for oil-based finish
- Takes fewer days to apply – dries & cures 33% faster

Although the water-based finish is more expensive and more difficult to apply, it is better for both you and the contractor. This contractor is very well qualified to apply the water-based finish and I am happy with his/her work.

Sincerely,

______________________________
Printed Name

______________________________
Date of Service