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Getting

Old decks get

Aging non-skid doesn't just detract from a boat's appearance, it presents a real safety problem as it wears smooth.

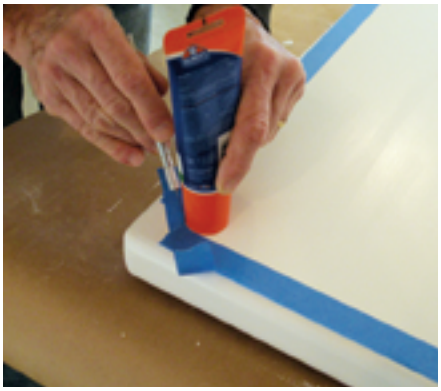
As our Pearson 28, *Indecision*, approached her 30th birthday, my wife, Mary, and I began to think about refreshing her non-skid. Because non-skid wears gradually and renewing it can be time-consuming and expensive, we procrastinated (as other sailors probably also do), ignoring the problem for as long as possible and blaming our old deck shoes for the slippery decks. But when new shoes failed to solve the problem and we thought about the safety issues involved, we began some serious research.

Our sailboat has hanked-on sails, so we needed a non-skid surface that would provide sufficient traction on a slippery, slanted deck but wasn't too aggressive on body parts. We also wanted something that would be durable and easy to clean. Of course, it had to look good too.

More non-skid products are available now than in the past and they generally fall into two categories: manufactured sheet materials and paints employing non-skid additives. Manufactured sheet materials are available in various sizes, thicknesses, and molded-in patterns. These are cut to fit. Some sheet materials — such as Treadmaster and Nautolex Decko Dot — must be applied with adhesives. Others — like SeaDek — come as peel-and-stick sheets.

Many paints, both one-part and catalyzed, can be mixed with additives like ground walnut shells or sand to achieve a random grippy surface. Some of these paints are modified with thickeners and then rolled to achieve a stippled surface. Another, Ultra Tuff Marine non-skid, is a water-based resin with recycled rubber granules blended into a single component.

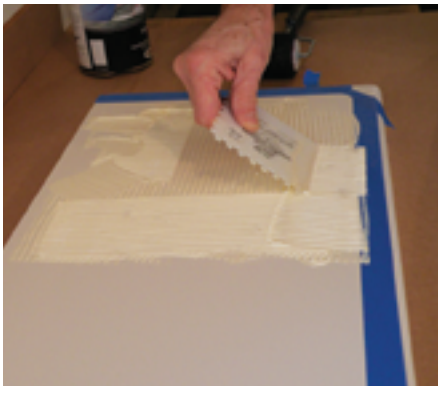
Each approach has its advantages and drawbacks. All require prep work and differing degrees of skill and patience to achieve good results. The manufactured sheet materials promised a professional-looking surface and durability, but we were concerned with the difficulty of removing or repairing individual sections. The paint products, particularly those with



After preparing the surfaces, Stephen masked around the areas to be coated.

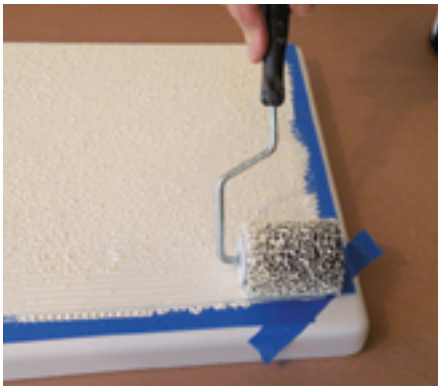
KiwiGrip's thick consistency means it could be spooned from the can.

The first step in the application was to place piles of paint on the surface.



Next, Stephen used a notched trowel to spread the paint across the surface.

Still using the spreader, Stephen covered the entire surface with an even coating.



The special roller works the paint onto the surface and gives it its "grippy" texture.

a grip

new non-skid out of a can

by Stephen Perry

Fresh non-skid boosted the crew's ability to move around the boat with surefooted confidence.

additives, also promised professional results and might be easier to repair or renew. We were still weighing the pros and cons of both methods when our research turned up a product called KiwiGrip that employed a third approach.

Texture in a can

KiwiGrip is a relative newcomer to the U.S. market but has been in use in New Zealand for more than 15 years. This product is a one-part acrylic paint that gets its anti-skid texture through application with a special roller. It comes pre-thickened to a consistency similar to what you would get by adding thickeners to the paints noted above. KiwiGrip is available in five standard colors, and the company will mix custom colors for a small additional fee. The company website describes it as a user-friendly product that can be applied by the average person with professional-looking results. Claims like that are widespread and personal experience has taught us to be skeptical about anything that sounds too easy, but we thought the product deserved a closer look.

KiwiGrip is pre-thickened and relies on a proprietary roller for its non-skid properties. That eliminates the need to mix in a non-skid additive, or sprinkle it on top of the wet painted surface, and two potential problems associated with those methods: the incomplete or uneven distribution of the additive and difficulty duplicating the non-skid pattern later if repairs are needed. The paint has a creamy consistency and the special roller creates a stippled pattern similar to what many boat manufacturers mold in during construction.

In some cases, KiwiGrip requires less surface preparation than other products; for example, no sanding is necessary when the product is applied over existing factory non-skid. Those surfaces should be cleaned with soap and water and dried. As with almost all paints (and resins), glossy surfaces should be sanded with fairly coarse sandpaper to ensure a good mechanical bond. It's also important to remove wax from any surfaces bordering areas where non-skid will be applied.

A decision made

We decided a paint-based non-skid would be the best way for us to achieve a professional-looking result while allowing the most flexibility for future repairs or renewal. We also wanted a contingency plan and thought this approach would be easiest to reverse or

Materials and tools

Before beginning any of the actual "wet work" involving paint or other coatings, I try to have everything on hand that I might possibly need. Here is the list of what we had at the ready for the non-skid project and a few notes that might be helpful.

- One quart KiwiGrip, color beige. Expected coverage is about 25 square feet. As with all paints, coverage can vary considerably. We would be covering 15 square feet with our trial run on the cockpit seats.
- Special texturing roller, a few disposable brushes, ⅛-inch notched plastic trowel, paper towels, sponges, masking tape, scissors, utility knife (an X-Acto knife is also useful), mixing sticks, two or three putty knives, disposable latex gloves, trash bags, and a couple of buckets with clean warm water for cleanup.
- Tarps to shield the cockpit area from the sun while we applied the product. Warm decks accelerate drying time and this can affect adhesion as well as the appearance of the finished surface. We ran the tarps from the lifeline on one side of the boat, over the boom to the lifeline on the opposite side, and tied them in place.

Resources

KiwiGrip may be ordered directly from the company, Pachena LLC, or through one of its distributors. A list of distributors in the U.S., Canada, and worldwide is available on the company's website. When ordering directly through the company's website, each order includes one roller cover. An additional roller cover is included for each additional 4-liter (or equivalent) order.

Pachena LLC
206-306-2222 (Seattle, WA)
info@pachena.com; www.pachena.com

correct if something went awry during the application.

I was initially concerned about KiwiGrip's longevity because it's a waterborne finish. My past experience with similar finishes was that, for outdoor use, they're not up to par with the usual solvent-based products. However, several waterborne epoxy paints and catalyzed finishes have come on the market in the last few years with reportedly good results. Waterborne paints are now used in many applications, including antifouling paints and commercial floor coatings. Acrylics are also used in many automotive paints and are said to have excellent adhesion, color retention, and scratch resistance.

We chose to give KiwiGrip a trial run on a small area before proceeding with the rest of the boat. We planned to start with the cockpit seat areas because their well-defined, nearly rectangular shapes seemed easy to mask and roll out quickly. The seats also had several blemishes where hardware fasteners had been removed and we wanted to see how well these could be covered. If something didn't look good right away, it would be easy to wipe off the material before anything set up. The instructions supplied with the product were very clear. We also sent a couple of emails to and called the U.S. distributor, Willy Stiggelbout, for additional advice. He provided moral support plus a few practical tips.

***Indecision*'s cockpit provided ideal surfaces on which to test the non-skid paint.**

Getting to work

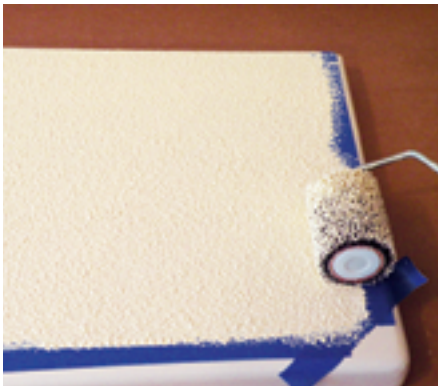
With the research completed, we were ready to get started on restoring security to our decks. It's always convenient to have an extra pair of hands available, especially when a project involves painting. Among other things, a helper can speed cleanup if there is a spill, allowing the painter to maintain concentration and the job to progress smoothly.

With the Kiwi product and all the usual painting paraphernalia in hand, we discussed who would do what. I, because I had the most experience in finish work, would mask off areas to be treated, then we would work panel-by-panel. Mary would distribute several small piles of KiwiGrip on each panel and I would spread and roll it. Mary would stand by to hand tools to the "expert," clean up as needed, and try to keep things together when the unexpected occurred.

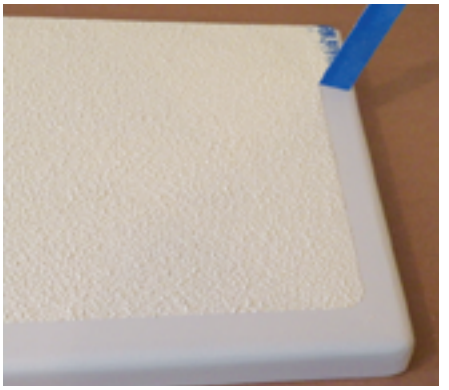
We chose a weather window carefully. It was August. We wanted a day with moderate temperatures and humidity and with no rain in the forecast for 48 hours. A windless day would be ideal to keep dust and debris off the freshly painted surfaces.

After washing the cockpit seats and letting the surfaces dry, we masked off the areas to be coated with blue painter's masking tape (because it contrasted well with the surface). We cut the rounded corners out of 2-inch tape and used 1-inch tape along the straight edges between the corners, keeping as close as possible to the margins of the existing non-skid and pressing the tape down firmly to prevent the KiwiGrip from bleeding under the edge.

Once the prep work was complete, we found ourselves looking at each other, knowing that the next step was to dip the brush in the can. There's always that moment before commencing any project when you look around, wondering what's been forgotten.



Stephen rolled the paint in all directions until the surface texture looked right.



Before the paint had time to set, Stephen carefully removed the masking tape.

The finished texture is easy on the eye and the skin but provides a good grip.

For a modest outlay in time and money, old non-skid can be made to feel like new.

Adapting to circumstances

As it turned out, there was not enough room in the cockpit for us to work elbow-to-elbow, so we quickly revised our original plan for Mary to distribute the KiwiGrip and for me to spread and roll it. Instead, I mixed the paint thoroughly and poured a small amount into a paint tray. Using a 3-inch brush, I dropped several piles of the KiwiGrip on the first panel, quickly spread it out using the ⅛-inch notched trowel and then rolled the area slowly. The paint spread easily and I slowly rolled it in all directions, as if I were painting a Sheetrock wall, until the texture was even and looked right.

We looked at each other again and proclaimed almost simultaneously how good it looked! I proceeded to the next panel and easily repeated the success of the first.

By the time the second panel was complete, the brush was slightly crusty from the paint drying a little too quickly. I thoroughly cleaned the trowel, roller, and brush in clear fresh water. Then we removed the tape. A little bit of paint came off with it; the non-skid was still far from dry but a couple of thin spots along the edges had dried more quickly than the rest. By applying more material with a Q-tip (a small thin stick works too), we were able to touch up those spots. Then we were on a roll and quickly finished the remaining two panels, being more careful to remove the tape promptly. This resulted in a nice clean edge.

The day had warmed up as we went along. This made a difference in how the KiwiGrip behaved on the last panel. The paint dried faster, resulting in a slightly more pronounced stipple pattern as it was rolled. A few touch-ups would be needed but we left well enough alone for the moment; we would complete the finishing touches after our work had cured.

We left the tarps up, put the brushes and other painting tools in a bucket of water, and left for the day. We could barely contain our excitement about coming back to give the new non-skid surface a trial.

A couple of days later, we returned to the boat, took down the tarps, and looked everything over carefully. We agreed the minor differences in degree of stipple between the panels were not pronounced enough to be a concern. The non-skid looked great and worked well; simply running a hand over the surface said "grippy."

We still had almost half of the first quart of KiwiGrip left. By our calculations, this would be enough to coat the cockpit sole. So on a 60-degree day in mid-October, we repeated the process on the cockpit sole. The lower air temperature extended our working time. I spread the paint a bit thinner than before to make sure we would not run short, but the end result was indistinguishable from what we had done before.

To be continued . . .

We enjoyed several weeks of sailing with our new non-skid surfaces until it was time to haul out and cover the boat for the winter. During what was left of the season, the non-skid proved its effectiveness and we purchased enough KiwiGrip to renew the rest of *Indecision*'s deck in the spring.

Stephen Perry is a marine surveyor and consultant who enjoys restoring good old boats in his spare time. He and his wife, Mary Broderick, have been sailing coastal New England waters together for more than 20 years on their Pearson 28, Indecision*, and hold USCG Masters licenses. They are currently restoring a Nicholson 35 and planning an extended cruise.*

Resources (continued)

Marine non-skid manufacturers

American Safety Technologies
Exterior/interior non-skid coatings
www.astantislip.com

Durabak company
Exterior/interior slip-resistant coatings
www.durabak.com

Nautolex Decko Dot
Marine non-skid flooring
www.csctextiles.com/nau.htm

SeaDek Marine Products
Peel-and-stick marine non-skid
www.seadek.com

Soft Point Industries
Rubber texturizing agent for paint
www.softsandrubber.com

Treadmaster
Anti-slip deck covering
www.tiflex.co.uk/marine/marine.html

Ultra Tuff Marine
Non-skid polyurethane safety coating
www.ultratuff.net/utmindex.htm

More online . . . For more notes on KiwiGrip, tips for making the job go smoothly, and lessons Steve and Mary learned, please go online to <www.goodoldboat.com/reader_services/more_online/KiwiGrip.php>.