The theory of fixing building blemishes by slapping a coat of paint on the wall doesn’t always work. It might work for a nick on a bedroom wall, but for other buildings, such as the industrial facilities that Coatings Unlimited Inc. (CUI) works on, the process is far more complex.

Manufacturing facilities, mining equipment, pharmaceutical plants, aerospace facilities, oil and gas plants, water and wastewater infrastructure and power plants are routinely exposed to heavy use, abrasive and corrosive materials and fluctuating temperatures and often times, all at once. Without the proper protection, the environment pronounces doom. However, the right materials applied by skilled craftsmen can save these expensive investments.

Founded in 1954 by Fred Philipp Sr., the family owned CUI offers several industrial coating and lining services, including composite repair systems made of fiber reinforced polymer composites that can strengthen steel and concrete structures. In addition to applying state-of-the-art coating products to steel and concrete structures, CUI also performs concrete repair and protection, fireproofing coatings, lead abatement, and extra-high pressure cleaning.

For each job, Vice President Steve Philipp Jr. explains that there is an ideal solution.

“We protect concrete and steel from corrosion and chemical attack and essentially protect plant assets,” Philipp explains.

“We work with clients to choose the right coating for each project,” he adds. “Sometimes we will consult and help the owner develop specifications, or, if they already have specifications in place, we will follow those or conduct value engineering to develop a solution that is just as good, if not better, and possibly save the owner money."

To accomplish this, CUI stays abreast of the latest coating technologies and the evolving needs of
“We want to give the owner state-of-the-art service and ... protect their assets.”

business owners. Philipp explains that today’s industrial facility and equipment owner seeks products that are multidimensional, such as a do-it-all coating that is resistant to abrasion, corrosion and high heat, and, if possible, in a “green” variety, such as one with low amounts of volatile organic compounds.

“One of our strengths is that we are always seeking out new technology in coatings and surface preparation applications and equipment,” Philipp explains. “We want to give the owner state-of-the-art service and stretch their maintenance dollars to protect their assets.”

Philipp explains the company creates value all while managing risks by maintaining its credentials as a Society of Protective Coatings (SSPC) audited contractor, which delivers consistency in performance, quality and safety.

Fit for the Job
A key part of getting the job done right, Philipp explains, is having the right personnel on each project, which is why CUI has made finding credentialed professionals and helping them maintain those credentials a paramount investment.

CUI partners with the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades to provide and enhance training in areas such as handling hazardous materials (HAZCOM), working in confined spaces, using proper scaffolding and lead abatement and fall protection techniques.

The training and certification gives project owners a clear signal that the tradesmen on their site know what they’re doing, but Philipp explains the process can be daunting. A new credentialing process, however, will make things simpler.

“Finding guys that are willing to travel, that have the training and are high-quality coating applicators is difficult, and then on top of that they have to be trained on the materials they are using and the equipment they are using and go through any training the owner may have,” Philipp explains. “A new trend for our industry is the SSPC Coating Application Specialist Certification Program.”

This new program is designed to certify craftsmen who have training and experience in all aspects of hands-on surface preparation and application of coatings to complex industrial and marine structures. “This way if a new hire walks onto a job and they all look the same, the guy who has these credentials will stand out because of his proven and documented skills,” Philipp says.

For many projects, having these certifications isn’t just for show – it’s necessary. CUI has worked for some big-name clients over the years and recently completed a project for Nestle Nutrition’s Fort Smith, Ark., plant where it manufactures Gerber products.
Plant Protection

Nestle added a new cereal manufacturing line with additional renovations to support its continuous improvement operations and increase capacity. The company announced that it was its most significant expansion and redesign of the plant since it opened in 1964.

“We were hired] to install FDA-compliant protective coating for the new concrete on all floors, walls, and ceilings of the new state-of-the-art food process facility,” Philipp says. “The $89.9 million plant and equipment expansion was a real challenge and a demanding project.”

CUI employed 30 specialty coating applicators and put in more than 42,000 man-hours—all incident free. The craftsmen profiled and resurfaced more than 170,000 square feet of concrete walls and ceilings, hand trowelled more than 70,000 square feet of process flooring and installed 12,500 bags of epoxy concrete repair materials. CUI workers also used 200 tons of abrasive and more than 11,000 gallons of FDA-compliant coating materials to the floors, walls and ceilings to create the high-hygiene surfaces necessary for an FDA-compliant baby food plant.

The end result is a coating system that is both functional and cleanable. The FDA-compliant coatings were finished to aesthetic detail, leaving the surfaces free of pinholes, runs, sags, drips and foreign debris. The extra effort, Philipp says, makes a lasting impression on the owner’s investment.

“We go into each project with the thought of being invited back by beginning with keeping the end in mind,” he says. “We try to create a relationship and maintain that relationship. We are not in the coating business; we’re in the relationship management business. We create long-term relationships by being safe on a project and doing a good job and giving the best service. By making the client look good, we look good.”

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