

Parking Deck, Boca Raton, Fla.

Several times I have been asked to present a case study of some of Pro Set's projects. In the past, I have been reluctant to do so because I felt the jobs would have been either too small, too mundane, or simply not of interest.

After our adventure on this parking deck, I have changed my mind and decided to share that story.

This was a relatively small job (30,000 sq. ft.), but it was enough for us to get excited about, particularly the warm Florida sun and the Atlantic Ocean gently breaking waves only 50 yards from the job site.

Six weeks before the project began, I visited the location. (Sunshine, 85 degrees and a soft ocean breeze.) It was truly beautiful. We negotiated and landed the project. The job had to be completed before the Christmas holidays and we would be limited to a closely confined time schedule as this was a condominium complex. (No work to begin before 8 a.m. and off the premises at 5 p.m.)

As the start date for the parking deck approached, we were able to reach a stopping point and postpone a job we were working on in Augusta, GA, (thank goodness) in order to meet the deadline in Florida.

Upon arrival in Boca Raton, we were greeted by anything but typical Florida weather conditions. The temperature was 44 degrees. They were experiencing record low temperatures and winds were exceeding 40 miles per hour. (Certainly not ideal or even acceptable conditions for spraying polyurea.)

Not to worry. We had a lot of pressure washing to do before we could get ready to spray. The second day on the job the sun was shining, wind was mild and conditions were good. However, I chose not to begin all out spraying, doing adhesion tests on the substrate before going on to what Ernie "Big Cat" Ladd, my partner, calls a "full court press."

After checking and getting great results with our polyurea over a tightly coated concrete substrate, we were sure to start up production on the next day.

Day three looked promising – very light winds under overcast sky – no rain expected until after nightfall. We heated up to our normal 180 degrees to start spraying, in hopes of getting 5,000-8,000 sq. ft. sprayed at 80 mls of our polyurea broadcasted with anti-slip aggregate. After applying for all of 10 minutes, it started to rain as it can only rain in a tropical area – in torrents! It didn't stop until after 4 p.m.

Lost a Complete Day

On day four, our U.S. Flag identified the wind direction, west to east, or, in other words, straight out to the ocean. I had no concerns about overspray (except maybe speckling my wife's bikini). I needed a little extra help, so I called her at the hotel. She showed up "beach ready" and only wanted to work the breaks.

It wasn't until day five, we realized we had a MAJOR PROBLEM. Sometime during spraying 8,000 sq. ft., the wind had obviously slightly changed directions and swirled toward another parking lot 100 yards north. People were having trouble cleaning their windshields. We had managed to spray 15 cars and God only knows how much patio/pool furniture.

My first reaction was to simply replace the furniture. That was until I found out each set cost \$2,700. (They had 10 sets.) No, we would be scrubbing off the overspray.

After spending hours trying to locate a compounder to help clean the cars, I finally found a helpful guy from my hometown, Philadelphia, PA, living in Boca Raton. He showed up in his Porsche to evaluate the situation. Now, for a mere 40 percent more than I would have to pay back in Monroe, LA, the problem could be solved.

The winds were not letting up and I was not about to spray every Mercedes in Boca Raton. If we were to finish spraying, we had to build a portable spray booth.

We used PVC pipes glued together with wind screen on the sides and a tarp on the top. This formed a 10' x 20' rectangular safety net that was so heavy it took two men just to move it. Within minutes of construction of this monstrosity, along came a 20-mile-per-hour wind that lifted the entire unmanned booth straight up and over a 7-foot fence and continued to carry it upward until it finally came to rest atop two Cypress trees in a city park.

It took six of us (five men and one speckled bikini-clad woman) quite a while to wrestle the "tree house" out of the trees and back over the fence before the park rangers or the turtle police caught and fined us.

Accomplishing our goal, we were off and running, spraying 2,000 sq. ft. on our first day of use with our UFO spray booth.

The next day it rained, but it was not a wasted day. It took the six of us all day to scrub the patio furniture.

Day seven, the always-reliable spray equipment must have decided it wanted to go to the beach, too. The entire heating system went out because of a short in the hose. We also discovered we had a broken fuse holder. Spending \$3,000 to \$4,000 in spare emergency parts (just in case) is really not a bad idea

I suppose all is well that ends well. Day eight we were able to spray 4,000 sq. ft. and on day nine, we sprayed an incredible 5,000 sq. ft. Keeping the pace, we finished the project and all were happy.

Tom Leaverton, Pro-Set Inc.