



San José-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility

Industrial Painter Profile

Name: Robert Matz

Job Category: Industrial Painter



1. Please describe the work you do:

I am a painter in the paint shop. I evaluate the surface condition of coated assets to determine if the coating is performing to certain expectations. If the coating is not performing adequately, I determine the amount of preparation needed to recoat the asset. Some coatings require little preparation, while others need to be completely removed from part, or all, of the asset. I prepare each surface differently, using one or more of a myriad of methods, usually starting with hand or pressure washing, then using scraper knives, wire brushes, sandpaper, power tools or even high pressure abrasive blasting to clean, strip, chip, scrape, abrade or completely remove the old coating surface before it can be repainted to assure adhesion of a new coating. After the surface of the asset is properly prepared and cleaned, I install coatings/linings using one or more of various methods of application to protect that surface from the elements for 10-25 more years. As I perform my work, I must do it safely, abiding by and complying with all applicable laws, rules and regulations. These rules, laws and regulations pertain to a large portion of my work, involving erection of scaffolding, personal/respiratory protection, fall protection, confined space entry, heavy equipment operation and environmental protection to name a few.

2. What combination of education, vocational training, apprenticeship, experience, and/or skill did you obtain in order to be qualified and selected for your job?

In order to become a painter for the San Jose-Santa Clara Regional Wastewater Facility, I had completed a 3 year apprenticeship program and had my High School Diploma. During my apprenticeship, I paid attention to the instructors, which paid off, because there was a written test for this job and it helps to have some written knowledge of the paint trade.

Before I came to work here, I learned how to spray paint with conventional and airless spray equipment as well as use brushes, rollers, mitts and other methods of application. I learned how to tape & texture drywall, wallpaper, stipple, spackle, patch, apply automotive coatings, spray texture coatings, and everything in between. I've painted substrates such as metal, concrete, wood, plaster; just about anything that can be painted. I've used water based

coatings that you can practically drink, 3 part epoxy coatings you shouldn't touch let alone get a whiff of, coatings that we put under ground to protect our water pipes, coatings that they use on jumbo jets to protect from the weather, and coatings that are designed to write on. I used, cleaned, learned to maintain and knew the proper names of all tools and equipment needed to perform my job, including Phillips screwdrivers, airless spray pumps, boots, paint brushes, ladders, scaffolding and respirators.

3. What do you like best about your job?

I like that there is something different to do every day or week or every third week or so. There are always challenges and things to keep the job interesting. The people care about their work and are easy to work with. I am provided the best in tools, materials, training, equipment and safety equipment, which makes it a relatively easy place to work and allows me to do my job to the best of my ability.

4. Please tell us about the projects and activities you have enjoyed most in your work in the water/wastewater field, and what made them rewarding:

It is always gratifying when I finish a paint job and the asset looks like new. I know that we are here for the long run so I do the best job I can in order that I don't have to paint it again too soon. Yet I'm always glad to be done with the work behind me and ready for the next project. Anytime that I can spray paint with a conventional spray system is when I enjoy my work the most.

5. What qualities and capabilities are needed in order for a person in your area of expertise to be successful in the water/wastewater industry?

You must be organized, have experience with different substrates, coatings/materials, tools/equipment and modes of application, as well as sandblasting experience. You should be able to get along well within a crew, be a team player, as well as possess patience and time organization skills.

6. Do you have any advice for an individual who is considering pursuing a career in your field in the water/wastewater industry?

Each of my years in the apprenticeship program was in a different district affording me the influence of 3 different instructors who specialized in diverse disciplines. I also worked for contractors that had the resources and knowledge that allowed me to experience all aspects of the industry from painting concrete floors to spraying acoustic ceilings and textured coatings on commercial buildings; from sandblasting and applying 2 and 3 component industrial coatings to metal fire escapes to spraying 5 coats of rubbed black lacquer on kitchen cabinets; from applying foil wallpapers to masking windows in 30 mph winds; and from taping and texturing sheetrock walls ceilings in houses to even painting cars and trucks. I've always liked to diversify my work and I've always tried to learn from watching others, if not for their wisdom or experience, then for a better way to do something.