

# Our Top 10 List

by Jim MacDonald,

Ontario Spray Booth -  
ontariospraybooth@bellnet.ca

**Not as entertaining**  
as David Letterman,  
**but hopefully more useful**

We have spent a lot of our energy in the last number of issues discussing 'water base transition', 'new spray booth features', 'listed equipment', 'hi-tech controls' and lots of other developments in the spray booth industry over the last 2 or 3 years.

**W**e have been forced to look at our equipment in order to make the ‘water base’ transition and as a result it has given booth companies like ours a chance to remind everyone of the products and options that are available to the shop. As a result, shops have upgraded, or at the very least been made aware of not only their shortcomings but also their strengths. The emphasis has been on product, application equipment and of course, the actual booths or painting environment.

With all that we have had to absorb, sometimes we can overlook the obvious. Despite what materials we are spraying (solvent base, water base, kryptonite based – I made that one up!), nothing will work unless we keep our equipment in good shape and review our daily shop habits and procedures. Whether we are spraying in an old cross draft or a state-of-the-art downdraft nothing will mess up paint jobs worse than overlooking the obvious!

With that said, we would like to remind everyone of a few tips we try to point out to our customers to help them use their equipment in a positive fashion. We are sure that some of the following tips are nothing new to most of you; however we are often thanked by shops for pointing out these things.

### **Pressurized vs. Unpressurized Spray Booths**

The following tips apply mostly to pressurized paint booths, i.e. booths that are directly connected to a heated air replacement unit. These systems are closed and have a dedicated air source, which sometimes can give the owner a false sense of security. ‘The air is coming in from outside the shop so it must be clean, right????’

For the most part YES! But, and a big but at that, we must remember it is a closed system and if it gets any type of dirt or contamination inside it, it will usually find its way to wet, freshly sprayed surfaces! The following tips are simple reminders of how you can get the best out of your pressurized paint spray booth.

**TIP #1 – Turn on the booth first thing in the morning and let it run before you bring in your first job.** This allows any contamination (yes shops are dirty places and dust, etc. will settle overnight) to be stirred up when the booth is first turned on (gas code provisions state the fan MUST come on before the air replacement system) and the fan runs momentarily without air replacement. This creates a moment of negative pressure when settled dust and contamination can be stirred up and whip about inside the booth. By simply allowing the empty booth to run for 15 or 20 minutes in the morning this stirred up dust will settle and be driven down into the filters to the floor. This gives you a nice balanced booth when you bring your first job of the day in. **Do not bring the car into a sedentary booth**

**and then turn it on!**

**TIP #2 –** I am glad to say we do not see this one too much any more, however, just in case you forgot, **‘the paint booth is for painting not sanding!’** This is self-explanatory, however, it was not unusual to see shops that did sanding inside the booth to contain the dust. Today, of course, process and flows are more common in shops and we know that the sanding is either done under a prep station or well away from the paint spray booth.

**TIP #3 – Paint booths are for painting and mix rooms are for mixing.** Mix your materials outside the booth. We still see little tables with tack rags, towels, cans, thinners, etc. sitting in a corner collecting dust! These tables do collect dust and when we are spraying near them the air jets of the gun can stir up this potential contamination and greatly increase the chance of ruining the paint job! Move it outside the booth – preferably into a well-lit, well-ventilated mix room!

**TIP #4 – Keep an eye on your booth balance gauge!** Despite what some think, **over-pressurized** booths will keep the shop dust out but often just blow contamination around inside the cabin. If we put too much air into the

**With all that we have had to absorb, sometimes we can overlook the obvious.**

*continued on page 28* ➡

booth and it cannot be exhausted fast enough it has to go somewhere and in downdraft booths it will usually fly along the floor and up the walls creating a vortex of contamination that swirls in a circular motion right next to the vehicle you are painting. Until the booth is properly balanced this vortex grows (filters are loading the moment you pull the trigger on the gun) and gets closer and closer to your wet surfaces. If not remedied air-dried overspray and wall and floor contamination WILL end up on your wet surfaces. Check the balance and if you do not have a balance gauge, GET ONE!

A side note – recently we wrote about Variable Frequency Drives on the newer booths. These VFD systems often include an ‘auto balance’ feature that takes some of this danger out of the equation.

**TIP #5 – Change your filters regularly!** Even VFD systems CANNOT overcome dirty pit or exhaust filters. If the filters are loaded and the air cannot get out, it has to go somewhere - and we just finished discussing that! Air-dry overspray is OFTEN mistaken for dirt or other contamination types. PS – don’t forget about your air make-up filters and your input filters (typically ceiling filters in a downdraft or semi-downdraft booth). If you change your pit or exhaust filters regularly you will prolong the life of the other two. Changing your filters is in direct relation to how busy a shop you have and how much spraying is going on, but a general rule of thumb is as follows:

- Exhaust – once a month

- Air Make-Up – 3 to 4 times a year
- Input (ceiling or input plenum) – once a year

**TIP #6 – Do not leave dirty rags in the booth.** This is especially true in ‘high temperature’ or ‘bake’ type systems as the elevated temperatures can release harmful contaminants from the dirty rags.

**TIP #7 – Never compromise your input filters.** This is especially true of ceiling filters in a downdraft booth. As we mentioned above, you should only have to change these once a year. When it comes time to change them make sure you are getting a premium high quality filter that is for pressurized downdraft systems (GFS Micro Clean, Viledon). We often see cheap 2-ply poly filters in booth ceilings and they are NOT designed to have air PUSHED through them and will rain down poly fibers on your freshly painted vehicle.


**TIP #8 – Never clean booth walls or floors with cotton mops or rags.** Damp cotton fibers will adhere to the walls and floor and then will release and become airborne inside the booth when they dry out.

**TIP #9 – Vacuum to clean out inside of booth.** Be sure to leave vacuum unit OUTSIDE the booth and only bring in the hose.

**TIP #10 – Periodically power wash the pit grates** (Applies only to downdraft booths). Overspray gets caught in the grates and will accumulate over a period of time. This accumulation will inhibit proper air flow and dried paint can also be released off the grates and make its way to your wet surfaces.

These are some very simple tips we like to remind everyone about. Your local paint rep or spray booth service company are great resources for more tips specific to your system.

If you have any tips you would like to share with us please e-mail them to [Ontariospraybooth@bellnet.ca](mailto:Ontariospraybooth@bellnet.ca).

Good Finishing! 

## TOOLS that make your job **EASIER!**



### Panel Shaper Kit

- Reshape badly deformed inner panels, body lines and floors
- Vibratory shaping takes less time & effort
- Three different head shapes to fit all your needs
- Fits all standard air hammers
- Replacement heads available

See your local body shop tool dealer  
or call 1-800-227-8325



**STECK**  
Innovative autobody tools and equipment

Part #20046  
20046A1-209 ©2009 Steck  
[www.steckmfg.com](http://www.steckmfg.com)

MADE IN THE USA  
with global materials

