

Healthy Floor Finishing Project (HFFP)



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Vietnamese-American Initiative for Development (Viet-AID)



Viet-AID

Viet-AID was formed in 1994 by community leaders who believed that a community-based development corporation could develop programs to reduce poverty, isolation, and alienation in the Vietnamese American community in Boston. Viet-AID believes in strengthening the Vietnamese community and building a vibrant Fields Corner neighborhood with our neighbors. Viet-AID achieves these goals by: developing affordable housing and commercial space; providing high quality child-care services; facilitating job and business development; and actively promoting civic engagement



Goal: protect the health, safety, and environmental justice of hardwood floor finishers, their customers, the environment and the general public

Objectives

- Education and training
- Street and community outreach
- Multi-media campaign
- Technical assistance

Target population

- Vietnamese immigrants: hardwood floor refinishers



HFFP Partners

- Vietnamese-American Initiative for Development (Viet-AID)
- Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health (MassCOSH)
- New Ecology, Inc.
- Floor Task Force:

Community Health Centers: Bowdoin St., Dorchester House, Codman Square

University of Massachusetts Lowell, floor finishing products manufacturers and distributors, floor finishing companies.



Baseline Knowledge

- Hundreds of Vietnamese hardwood floor finishers around Boston
- Work involves heavy machinery, volatile solvents, and wood dust
- *Note:* no knowledge of specific health hazards, health outcomes, or feasible interventions



Trigger for Action

Boston area house fires caused by floor refinishing, 2004-2005

- 3 workers dead
- 4 workers badly burned
- 2 homes destroyed

All Vietnamese immigrants



TEAM 5

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Cause of Problem

- Lack of knowledge of safe handling practices and less toxic alternative products.
- Resistance to switch to less toxic products
- Customers are not aware of less toxic alternative products.
- No certification, licensing, or training requirements for this trade



Recommendations

- Do not use flammable products indoors (flash point < 100 °F)
- Use less toxic products
- Learn techniques to achieve desired appearance without lacquer sealers
- Use water-borne products
- Use dustless equipment
Keep wood dust away from sunlight, heat
- If using combustible products, turn off all pilot lights in unit
- Ventilate with sparkproof fans
- Wear gloves, goggles, etc. as needed



Training for Floor Finishers

- Develop curriculum on safe handling techniques and safer alternative products.
- Hands-On Techniques for Using Less Toxic Products and Safer Equipment
- General Health and Safety.
- Fire Prevention
- All in Vietnamese language, convenient location, incentives offered, well-advertised



Education for Consumers

- Fact sheets on choosing safe floor finishing contractors
- Incorporation into First Time Homeowners' Course, Mass Affordable Housing Alliance
- Release report, host press conference on protecting workers and homeowners
- Designing broader public fire prevention campaign



Media Campaign for Finishers

- Vietnamese-language public affairs TV programs
- Radio announcements
- Logo contest
- Regular newspaper column in 2 major Vietnamese papers
- Posters, brochures



How to measure impact?

- Documented change by individual contractors
- Large properties renovated with less toxic products/ safe practices
- Sales of less toxic products

Conclusions

Our community healthier, our economy stronger, our world greener.



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