

# Application Guide STEEL-IT® Epoxy System

*Consisting of:*

- STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat
- STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat

***Surface Preparation, Application Instructions, and  
Recommended Spray Gun Equipment Settings***



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## 1. PREPARATION

Proper surface preparation is key to the success of any coating job, whether the coating is STEEL-IT or another brand. It's often said in the coatings industry that roughly 85% of all paint failures are due to improper or insufficient surface preparation and application.

STEEL-IT coatings adhere to metal surfaces through mechanical adhesion, meaning the coating holds onto the surface by interlocking with a rough profile established on the bare metal, which is ideally achieved by grit-blasting or power-sanding.

### SURFACE PREPARATION

Metal surfaces should be clean and free of all rust, old paint, greases, waxes, salts, dirt, scale, etc.

It's best if the surface being coated can be grit-blasted (e.g. sandblasted) to a 1.5 - 2.0 mils (0.0015" – 0.0020"; 38-50 microns) sharp angular cut profile per SSPC SP-6 (Commercial Blast). STEEL-IT coatings require this rough, "scarified" surface profile in order to have some tooth to bite into and adhere properly.

If blasting is not an option, power-sanding (e.g. with a dual-action sander) using #36 grit sandpaper will achieve similar results on steel. The surface once properly prepared should feel much like the strike area on a matchbox.

After grit-blasting, blow any remaining grit material off using an air hose and/or solvent clean the surface with acetone, alcohol, or xylene. Avoid using products that leave behind an oily residue (such as mineral spirits).

Another surface preparation option for the Epoxy System is to use the Monti Bristle Blaster, a power tool that also achieves proper surface conditions. Stainless Steel Coatings, Inc. has no affiliation with Monti; it is merely an available option in the marketplace. For more information, visit: <http://www.monti.de/en/products/bristle-blaster>

### REQUIRED AMBIENT CONDITIONS

When using the STEEL-IT Epoxy System:

- Apply only when ambient and substrate surface temperatures are between 50° F (10° C) and 100° F (38° C)
- Relative humidity is less than 85%
- Substrate surface temperature and the temperature of the coating are at least 5° F (2.75° C) above the dew point.

### SAFETY

Apply STEEL-IT in a well-ventilated area.

When applying STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat and STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat, it is critical to use:

- A NIOSH approved respirator using an organic vapor cartridge
- Nitrile gloves

### SUFFICIENT AGITATION IN PLACE OF ADDING THINNER

Before applying STEEL-IT, **it is critical that the contents be sufficiently agitated for five minutes**. This can be accomplished using a mechanical paint shaker or a mechanically driven paddle, at the end of a drill, for example. Hand stirring using a wooden stick will not provide sufficient agitation to properly prepare STEEL-IT for application.

Unlike other paints and coatings where agitation or stirring is required to assure the homogeneity of the can's contents, in the case of STEEL-IT, agitation plays the critical role of adding enough energy into the coating to break temporary chemical bonds that have formed and thickened the coating as it's sat in the can. Adding energy makes the can's contents less viscous thus eliminating the need for thinners and readying STEEL-IT for application.

If agitated properly, STEEL-IT coatings should not require thinning with solvents before use. **Adding thinner or reducer is highly discouraged** because they increase the chance of trapping solvents and may negatively affect the coating's proper drying and curing processes. While a very limited amount of reducer can be added if absolutely necessary (no more than 5%), adding too much solvent will alter the coating's chemistry.

### INDUCTION TIME

The STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat and the STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat are each two-component coatings.

For each product, mix their respective Components A and B in a 1:1 ratio and then **allow a 45-minute induction time.**

An induction or “sweat-in” time is the time required to achieve full compatibility in the mixed coating. **If the specified induction time is not adhered to, the applied coating may exhibit cratering, the formation of amine carbonate on the coating surface, poor gloss, and less than optimum cure.**

This need for induction is due to the high aromaticity of the epoxy component and the relatively aliphatic character of the curing agent component. This results in the initial blend being incompatible. However, as the epoxy and curing begin to react, this mixture becomes more compatible as the rate of reaction increases as it is catalyzed by the heat of reaction.

The mixed coatings have a pot life of 6-8 hours

## 2. APPLICATION

### FILM THICKNESS

Typically we recommend one coat of precoat at 3 mils (0.003"; 75 microns) dry film thickness (DFT), and one coat of topcoat also at 3 mils (0.003"; 75 microns) DFT.

A second coat of topcoat at 3 mils (0.003"; 75 microns) DFT can be applied in situations where conditions are particularly harsh due to chemical-, abrasion-, or impact-exposure, as examples.

In order to achieve 3 mils (0.003"; 75 microns) DFT of the STEEL-IT Epoxy System, the following wet film thicknesses (WFT) should be applied:

STEEL-IT EPOXY SYSTEM	NUMBER OF MILS (MICRONS) TO APPLY WET TO GET 3 MILS (75 MICRONS) DRY
• STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat	6 mils (0.006"; 155 microns)
• STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat	7 mils (0.007"; 180 microns)

### PROPERLY MEASURING STEEL-IT COATINGS' FILM THICKNESS

**The amount applied should be measured when the coating is wet using a wet film thickness gauge**, which is a very simple tool. A useful demonstration of how to use such a gauge can be found on YouTube at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DtmEBBzIWQc>.

When using STEEL-IT brand coatings, most electronic gauges used to measure dry film thickness can give seriously inaccurate results. That's because such gauges try to locate the substrate, and then measure the distance from the tool to the substrate and conclude that that is the thickness of the coating. However, because of the abundance of stainless steel in STEEL-IT coatings and the fact that they form a barrier coat of stainless steel near the surface of the coating, most electronic gauges often misinterpret this barrier coat as the substrate and report too little coating has been applied.

### **Electronic Gauges That Correctly Measure STEEL-IT's DFT**

After working with STEEL-IT brand coatings, two leading electronic dry film thickness gauge companies – Defelsko Instruments and Imaginant/PELT – have determined that the following models accurately measure STEEL-IT coatings' DFT:

#### Defelsko Instruments

1. PosiTector 6000 F1
2. PosiTest FM mechanical (magnetic principle) coating thickness gauge,
3. PosiTest DFT ferrous (magnetic principle) electronic instrument

#### Imaginant/PELT

1.  $\mu$ Pts3H Pelt ultrasonic film thickness gauge, coupled with a PELT-XER-M100 transducer and FC-U1STU40 wearcap

Both manufacturers recommend that if customers have difficulty reading STEEL-IT brand coatings thicknesses, that the customer contact them directly for guidance.

DRYING TIME AND RECOAT WINDOWS

**STEEL-IT Epoxy System**

STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat

- Dry to touch: 2 hours
- Tack free to handle: 12 hours
- Dry to recoat window: 12-24 hours
- If product is not topcoated within 24 hours, a light scuff-sanding using #200 grit paper is required before topcoating.

STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat

- Dry to touch: 2 hours
- Tack free to handle: 12 hours
- Dry to recoat window: 12-24 hours
- Light duty use: 36 hours; Ideally, wait 5-7 days before putting newly coated equipment into full service
- In cases when a second topcoat will be applied, subsequent coats will be dry to handle in 24 hours. If product is not topcoated within 24 hours, a light scuff-sanding using #200 grit paper is required before topcoating.
- The coating's hardness and chemical resistance increase at an accelerated pace initially, then more slowly, attaining near maximum values after two weeks.

EXPECTED COVERAGE

STEEL-IT SYSTEM	COMPRISED OF	PRACTICAL COVERAGE AT 3 MILS (75 MICRONS) DFT*
• Epoxy	STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat	215 sq ft/gal (19.9 sq m/gal)
	STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat	185 sq ft/gal (17.0 sq m/gal)

\* Assumes 20% loss due to overspray and waste



### 3. THINNING AND CLEANUP

#### Thinning

As explained in the section *Sufficient Agitation*, it is unnecessary to use thinners when working with STEEL-IT brand coatings. Unlike other paints and coatings, power agitation of STEEL-IT while it's still in the can – adding sufficient energy to break short-term chemical bonds that have formed and thickened the coating – is the way to thin STEEL-IT and prepare it for spraying or other form of application.

If, for some reason, it is absolutely necessary to add thinner, use only SSC 6811 Equipment Cleaning Blend or aromatic, glycol ether-based solvents. Do not dilute the coatings more than 5%.

#### Cleanup

To clean spray guns and other application equipment after applying the STEEL-IT Epoxy System, the following solvents should be used:

#### **Solvents to use to cleanup application equipment**

COATING	SOLVENTS FOR CLEANUP
STEEL-IT Epoxy System	SSC 6811 Equipment Cleaning Blend*; or use aromatic, glycol ether-based solvents

\* Manufactured by Stainless Steel Coatings, Inc., the makers of STEEL-IT brand coatings.

#### **4. RECOMMENDED\* SPRAY GUN EQUIPMENT SETTINGS FOR USE WITH THE STEEL-IT EPOXY SYSTEM**

This section provides settings recommendations for commonly used types of spray gun equipment for use with the STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat and STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat.

##### **Spray Gun Equipment Types Evaluated**

1. Conventional Gravity Feed Air Spray Guns
2. Conventional Pressure Feed Air Spray Guns
3. HVLP Guns
4. Heated HVLP Guns
5. Airmix (“AAA”, or “Air Assisted Airless”) Guns
6. Heated Airmix (“Heated AAA”, or “Heated Air Assisted Airless”) Guns
7. Airless Guns
8. Conventional Siphon Feed Air Spray Guns\*\*

\* Actual settings may differ due to equipment manufacturer, altitude, or weather conditions. However, the recommendations found on the four pages that follow should provide a solid starting point.

\*\* Conventional Siphon Feed Air Spray Guns are not recommended for use with any STEEL-IT Coating Systems.

## STEEL-IT Epoxy System

- **STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat**

*Conventional Gravity Feed Spray Guns*

- Transfer Efficiency (est.) 30%
  - Fluid nozzle: 2.2 – 2.7 mm
    - Flow rate:
      - Without atomizing air: 2 oz./min.
      - With atomizing air: 4 oz./min.
  - Air pressure: 40 psi

*Conventional Pressure Feed Air Spray Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 30%
  - Fluid nozzle: 2.2 – 2.7 mm
    - Flow rate:
      - Without atomizing air: 4 oz./min.
      - With atomizing air: 6 oz./min.
  - Air pressure 40 psi

*Heated HVLP Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 60%
  - Fluid nozzle: 1.8 mm
    - Flow rate: 6 oz./min.
  - Air pressure
    - When triggered: 10 psi
    - On pot: 40 psi
  - Inline heater temp: 110° F

*Airmix (“AAA”, or “Air Assisted Airless”) Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 60%
  - Tip: .015
    - Flow rate: 18 oz./min.
  - Fluid pressure: 1800 psi
  - Air pressure when triggered: 15 psi

- **STEEL-IT 4210 Epoxy Precoat (cont.)**

*Heated Airmix (“Heated AAA”, or “Heated Air Assisted Airless”) Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 70%
  - Tip: .015
    - Flow rate: 16 oz./min.
  - Fluid pressure: 1500 psi
  - Air pressure when triggered: 12 psi
  - Inline heater temperature: 110° F

*Airless Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 40%
  - Tip: .016 airless
    - Flow rate: 21 oz./min.
  - Fluid pressure when triggered: 2400 psi

**NOT RECOMMENDED**

*Conventional Siphon Feed Air Spray Guns:*

- With either a 1.8 mm or 2.2 mm fluid nozzle, the product is too viscous to siphon smoothly, unless excessive pressures (90+ lbs) are used.

*HVLP Guns*

- At the EPA recommended limit of 10 psi at the air cap, atomization is unacceptable, even at rates as low as 4 oz./min.

- **STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat**

- Conventional Gravity Feed Spray Guns*

- Transfer Efficiency (est.) 20%
      - Fluid nozzle: 2.2 – 2.7 mm
        - Flow rate:
          - Without atomizing air: 2 oz./min.
          - With atomizing air: 4 oz./min.
      - Air pressure: 40 psi (high, but not uncommon for viscous coatings)

- Conventional Pressure Feed Air Spray Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 20%
      - Fluid nozzle: 1.8 mm with ¼” fluid hose
        - Flow rate: 4 oz./min.
      - Fluid nozzle: 2.2 mm with 3/8” fluid hose
        - Flow rate: 6 oz./min.
      - Air pressure: 40 psi
      - Fluid pressure on pot: 40 psi

- HVLP Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 60%
      - Fluid nozzle: 1.8 mm
        - Flow rate: 4 oz./min.
      - Atomizing air pressure when triggered: 10 psi
      - Fluid pressure on pot: 50 psi

- Airmix (“AAA”, or “Air Assisted Airless”) Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 70%
      - Tip: .015
        - Flow rate: 15 oz./min.
      - Fluid pressure: 1000 psi
      - Air pressure when triggered: 15 psi

- **STEEL-IT 4907 Epoxy Topcoat (cont.)**

*Airless Guns*

- Transfer efficiency (est.) 40%
  - Tip: .016 airless
    - Flow rate: 28 oz./min.
  - Fluid pressure when triggered: 2000 psi

**NOT RECOMMENDED**

*Conventional Siphon Feed Air Spray Guns:*

- With either a 1.8 mm or 2.2 mm fluid nozzle, the product is too viscous to siphon smoothly, unless excessive pressures (90+ lbs) are used.

*Heated HVLP Guns*

- Even at 110° F, the raised temperature may lead to micro-popping/solvent-popping, with a noticeable loss of gloss

*Heated Airmix (“Heated AAA”, or “Heated Air Assisted Airless”) Guns*

- Even at 110° F, the raised temperature may lead to micro-popping/solvent-popping, with a noticeable loss of gloss