

GRIPSTAR™ ANTI-SKID FRP FINISH ENABLES MAKER OF “TOY HAULER” RAMPS TO DELIVER BOTH ADDED TRACTION AND VALUE TO OEMs

A strong reputation for quality craftsmanship coupled with innovative thinking in product development continues to be a winning formula for Nappanee Window, LLC, Nappanee, IN. Founded just 15 years ago, Nappanee Window continues to strengthen its position as a front runner in the design and manufacturer of specialized products for the RV, cargo and horse trailer markets.

In addition to its popular concession windows, the northern Indiana-based firm also produces a full line of baggage doors and entrance doors. More recently, Nappanee began producing and marketing a line of doors/ramps for specialty trailers—used to transport such vehicles as motorcycles, snowmobiles, and 4-wheelers—that have come to be known as “toy haulers”. Beyond eliminating the need for OEMs to design and build their own ramps, Nappanee’s easy lifting side and rear doors/ramps combine lightweight performance and rugged durability with the reduced labor costs that result from substantially faster and easier installation on the assembly line floor.

While the ramps have successfully captured and held the attention of the most quality conscious OEMs in the toy hauler market, Nappanee has never been the kind of company that’s satisfied to leave “good enough” alone. So, in a move calculated to provide even greater value to its rapidly expanding list of specialty trailer customers, Nappanee’s product design team began searching for ways to improve on the ramps’ spray-on bedliner surface.

This search ultimately led them to Kemlite’s Filon® Gripstar™ anti-skid, moisture-resistant, fiberglass composite panel flooring finish.

“We compared Filon Gripstar to a number of competitive products,” says Nappanee’s Evan Bontrager, President, “but none of them offered the full range of benefits of the Kemlite product.”

In listing those collective benefits, Bontrager begins with the non-slip, anti-skid properties that provide superior traction in all kinds of weather conditions. Next, he cites the abrasion and dent resistant Gripstar surface for its ability to withstand the abuse that is inherent to frequent loading and off-loading of all-terrain vehicles. Going a step further, Bontrager points out that Gripstar actually acts to make the ramp stronger, and represents a measurable improvement over the spray-on painted bedliner surface that had been employed previously.

According to Bontrager, the waterproofing qualities stand out as another important advantage of Kemlite’s granulate Gripstar surface finish. “Since our ramps are constructed from aluminum extrusions with laminated cores, the possibility of moisture damage is always a major concern,” says Bontrager. “By laminating the Gripstar surface directly onto the ramp we achieve a waterproof seal that protects the core material from the effects of moisture, while also preventing any build-up of mold and mildew that could potentially affect the long-term performance and life cycle of our product.”

Finally, Bontrager can’t help but note the improvement in the plant working environment since replacing the bedliner coating process with Gripstar, which is delivered in rolls that are cut to size and then laminated to the doors/ramps. “Like everyone else these days, we too are concerned about the potential danger posed by toxic VOCs. By eliminating the use of the spray-on bedliner process for the toy hauler ramps, Kemlite’s Gripstar product helps us cut down on the fumes and overspray that go along with post-applied coatings.”

Kemlite Company, Inc., a Crane Co. company is located in Joliet, Illinois, with additional manufacturing locations in Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, and England.

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