



Dealing with colour variation

Almost as soon as painted plastic components became common, the issue of apparent colour variations seemed to follow. Typically, this appears as a slight mismatch of colour between a bumper and adjacent body panels and it's often seen on brand new vehicles. Owners tend not to notice any anomaly until an accident puts the focus directly on that area. This is why it's super important to cover off on the phenomenon with the owner before repairs commence, as well as using a refinish process that you can rely on to achieve a factory finish or better.

Tips and recommendations

Understand why

Researching why apparent colour variations happen from new puts you in the best position to help vehicle owners understand the anomaly. The culprit can be found in various areas of the OEM production process,



including plastic components being painted in a totally different location, as well as potentially using different paint technology, a different application method, or using a different spectral grey primer colour.

Managing customer expectations

This is the most crucial step. When the vehicle is checked-in or arrives for an estimate, have a discussion with the owner. Look at the vehicle together, point out any existing colour variations and explain why they happen. The common response is, "I never noticed that". It's here that you can explain the challenges this presents to refinish painters but that your team has the skills, products and processes to either return the vehicle to the factory appearance or even slightly better. With everyone on the same page, it should make for a much smoother vehicle pick up after the repair.

Hitting the target

Another advantage of managing customer expectations is that your painters then have a target. Instead of aiming for perfection, which might not be achievable, they can target the best match possible.

Polish up your spectro reading

As with any repair, be sure to properly prepare and polish the adjoining panels to bring out the depth of colour and ensure the most precise spectro reading is taken.

Spectral grey groundcoat

One of the keys to achieving the target match is to use the correct spectral grey groundcoat shade as most modern OEM colours tend to be transparent. The groundcoat actually forms a crucial part of the overall

topcoat colour, as well as reducing topcoat material usage and application time. PPG's industry-leading PAINTMANAGER XI software includes a recommended spectral grey groundcoat shade for every topcoat colour on the database.

It's a setup

To assist refinish technicians, PPG's local team has carried out in-depth research on the all-important spray gun setup, as well as effective application tips and techniques. These recommendations not only make the job easier for technicians, but they also actually help them mimic the OEM process that produced the colour in the first place.

Avoid a black mark

Don't be tempted to paint straight over a new black plastic part. As well as consuming a lot more material and application time, it provides insufficient adhesion to the substrate and the black underneath will still end up grinning through to affect the overall colour match.

Prime, even when pre-primed

When a new plastic part comes pre-primed, don't take the shortcut of simply rubbing it and painting over the top. Applying a quality wet-on-wet primer gives two advantages - it allows the right spectral grey groundcoat shade to be applied, and it ensures there is solid adhesion between the substrate and the basecoat.



This article supplied courtesy of John Hristias - PPG Business Support Manager Asia/Pacific