

You Made Your Bed, Now Line It

Spray-on bedliners comprise one of the fastest -growing segments of the light truck accessory market. Here's how—and why—to get a piece of this pie chart.

By Matt Frary

As costs for light trucks continue to rise, owners are increasingly looking for ways to protect their investments for the long-term. One way is to install a bedliner, one of the most popular accessories for light trucks. As this trend continues, buyers are choosing the performance and aesthetic benefits of spray-on bedlining over traditional plastic drop-in liners.



“The fairly new spray-on bed liner aftermarket is growing substantially, and was expected to reach about \$90 million in 1998,” reports an April 1999 study from Frost and Sullivan, an independent researching firm. “As the price of pickup trucks continues to rise, buyers are anxious to protect their vehicles from rust, abrasion, dents and chemical corrosion. By offering permanent protection with a weather-resistant, contoured-fit, spray-on solutions will increasingly be the choice of new truck buyers.”

Creative Coatings, a spray-on bed liner and truck accessory company based in Monroe, LA, has sprayed over 6,000 trucks. They turned to a urethane spray produced by SWD Urethane in Mesa, AZ, a company specializing in polyurethane foam systems, specialty coatings, and polyols.

Spray-on linings are made of long-lasting, scrape-resistant urethane for a permanent, flexible

seal that prevents rust without wasting valuable bed space. Much like drop-in liners replaced rubber mats, spray-on linings will now replace the outdated drop-in models.

Drop-in truck plastic bed liners suffer from several weaknesses in design and function. They consume storage space because they leave a roughly two-inch gap between the liners and the steel truck body. Also, since a tight seal cannot be formed, air, water, leaves and other debris can become trapped between the liner and the metal of the truck bed, causing rust and rot. Because drop-ins slide around, they can wear away the paint underneath, leading to additional rust problems. Their surfaces can also be slippery and in high heat, the plastic can warp and even tear.



“Comparing drop-in liners with the spray-on liners is like comparing a stage coach to the space shuttle. It is that much of a difference,” said Paul Hansen, owner of Creative Coatings. “People just don’t use or want drop-in liners anymore...they scratch your truck, cause rust and you lose space in your bed.”

For suppliers, drop-in liners cause distribution problems as well. They are bulky and difficult to ship and store in crowded parts stores. Additionally, since they are specially formed for each truck, they are difficult to keep in stock and demand is hard to determine. The spray-on alternative, however, can be applied to any truck to form a perfect, water-tight, contoured fit, and supplies are easily shipped and stored.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), plastic drop-in bed liners pose a fire and explosion risk. NHTSA Administrator Ricardo Martinez explained that when filling a portable gas tank on a plastic bed liner, the bed liner acts as an insulator, allowing static electricity to build up on the gasoline container while it is being filled. Driving the vehicle causes the bed liner to move around, which builds additional static electricity. Because the fuel pump acts as a ground, it can generate a spark that could ignite the fuel and fumes.

Spray-on bed liners suffer from none of the drawbacks of conventional bed liners. The material adheres with a water-tight seal directly to the bed surface, leaving no room for air or water underneath. The spray penetrates every nook and cranny, minimizing loss of space, and it won’t crack, split, peel, chunk-out, or warp. Also, the lining protects against vibration, road noise and load slippage with its textured surface.

The application process involves masking the truck with a special wire tape, lightly sanding down the bed and the area to be sprayed to aid in adhesion, and spraying the vehicle in a booth. Spraying takes only 10 minutes and the SWD 951 Quik-Shield urethane cures in eight

to 10 seconds into a hard protective surface. The entire process can take only an hour and a half.

A spray-on lining finish is more aesthetically pleasing, more like a factory-installed option than drop-ins. The SWD urethane lining can be ordered to match the truck's paint or even altered with custom logos to match the maker's emblem.

"Spray-on lining gives you more control over texture as well. I can make it as slick as Formica or I can texture it to prevent slippage," said Hansen. "If you want it no-skid, I can inject aluminum oxide into the mixture for a sandpaper finish. It just gives you more options in a longer-lasting, more efficient product."

While the spray-on lining can cost more than drop-ins up front, its longer life span and higher performance pays for itself over the truck's life. If the liner requires repair, the operation is simple and inexpensive.

The protections of spray-on SWD 951 Quik-Shield urethane is used in commercial and custom applications such as ambulances, fire trucks, dump trucks, boat hulls and floors, trailers, RV roofs, and Jeep floorboards. Creative Coatings has sprayed items including baptismal tanks, matching the tank color to the colors of the murals; and even the toes of baseball cleats. A special coating to restore of the appearance of most existing truck bed liners is also available.

For more information ...

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