OTTAWA COMMERCIAL EPOXY

Workplace Safety & SDS

Safety data sheets, designated substances, fumes and flammable products, and slip resistance in Ontario workplaces

5 Expert Answers from Coatings IQ

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Q1

Are low-odour coatings safer for an Ottawa clinic?

"Low-odour" is a marketing description, not a safety classification. Whether a coating is safer for a clinic depends on what is in it, and that information lives in the product's Safety Data Sheet, not on the label.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act requires an employer to make a copy of the Safety Data Sheet readily available to workers who may be exposed to a product. Section 2 of the SDS lists hazard classifications, including whether a product is a skin or respiratory sensitiser. Section 9 lists the flash point, which tells you whether the product is a flammable liquid under the Ontario Fire Code. A product marketed as low-odour may still carry sensitiser classifications or a low flash point; a product with a stronger smell may not. The only way to compare two products on safety is to read their SDSs side by side.

What to ask about for a clinic specifically

- Flames and sparks during application: The Ontario Fire Code (O. Reg. 213/07, s.4.1.5.2) says open flames, sparks or heat shall not be permitted in an area where flammable or combustible liquids are stored, handled or used unless controlled in a manner that will not create a fire or explosion hazard. If the clinic has pilot lights, oxygen lines or sparking equipment nearby, ask the contractor for the SDS before any product is selected, and confirm the flash point.
- Who is in the building: Patients, staff or residents with respiratory sensitivities are a real planning consideration. Ask the contractor which products they intend to use, for the SDSs in advance, and whether the space needs to be vacated and for how long. The data sheet for the product governs that window, not the marketing copy.
- Floor performance under Reg. 851: R.R.O. 1990, Reg. 851 (Industrial Establishments), s.11 says a floor used by any worker shall not have any finish or protective material that is likely to make the surface slippery. That applies to the finished floor regardless of which system is chosen.
- WSIB clearance: Under WSIB policy 14-02-19, a business retaining a contractor for construction work must obtain a clearance certificate before work begins and keep it in effect throughout. The householder exemption does not apply to a business.

Before a contractor visits, it helps to gather the floor's history (age of the slab, any previous coatings or adhesives, whether old tile or mastic is present and whether it has been tested for asbestos), a note on what spills and traffic the floor sees, how long the clinic can realistically close or phase work, and whether any areas have oxygen or gas lines nearby. That information lets a contractor match a product to the space rather than defaulting to whatever they have on hand.

You can submit a project request through the form on this page and contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory will reply by email.

Q2

Who handles used rags and waste after a coating job in Ontario?

Who handles used rags and waste should be written into your contract with the floor contractor, and Ontario law places duties on both the contractor and the business owner.

Under the Ontario Fire Code (O. Reg. 213/07), section 4.1.5.4.(2), used rags contaminated with flammable or combustible liquids shall be placed in proper receptacles. Whether a product's rags fall under that rule depends on the product's flash point, which appears in Section 9 of its safety data sheet. Ask the contractor for the SDS for every product being applied, and ask them how they will store and remove contaminated rags and waste containers during the job.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act also applies. Under OHSA section 38(1.1), the employer shall make a copy of a safety data sheet readily available to workers who may be exposed. If any of your own staff will be in or near the work area during the job, ask the contractor for the SDS for each product before work begins. Section 2 of each SDS sets out the hazard information, including whether a product is a skin or respiratory sensitiser.

For waste disposal beyond the job site, the contractor should be able to tell you how they dispose of empty containers, mixed waste and contaminated materials under Ontario's environmental rules. That is outside this site's scope, but it is a fair question to put in writing before work starts.

Before the contractor leaves the site, ask for copies of the product data sheets and safety data sheets for every product used, and any written warranty the contractor is providing. Keep the signed contract, the before-and-after photos, and all of those documents together: they are the record of what was installed, under what conditions, and by whom.

Q3

Can a floor coating trigger allergies in an Orleans office?

Whether a floor coating product can cause a reaction depends on the product: some are classed as skin or respiratory sensitisers on their safety data sheets, and the people responsible for the workspace have legal obligations before, during and after the work.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, an employer whose workers may be exposed to a product must make a copy of the safety data sheet readily available to those workers (OHSA s.38(1.1)). Ask the contractor for the SDS for every product they plan to use before work begins. Section 2 of the SDS lists hazard classifications,

including whether a product is classified as a skin sensitiser or a respiratory sensitiser. Section 9 gives the flash point, which tells you whether the product is a flammable liquid and whether open flames, pilot lights or sparking equipment must be kept away from the work area under the Ontario Fire Code (O. Reg. 213/07, 4.1.5.2).

Floor coating in an occupied building is likely construction work under OHSA, where the employer and the constructor each carry duties.

For the people working in the office during or after coating:

- Get the SDS for each product before work starts and read Section 2.
- Plan ventilation and phasing so that office staff are not present while products are being applied and while the floor is curing; the data sheet for the specific product sets the times.
- Ask the contractor what ventilation they will provide during application.

Ottawa Commercial Epoxy is a matching service; contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory can reply to a request submitted through the form on this page.
Comparing quotes, look at the product names with their data sheets and SDSs, the prep method and the surface profile the contractor is targeting, whether a moisture test is included and what happens if the slab fails it, the number of coats or the thickness called out in the data sheet, whether cove base is included and at what linear footage, what anti-slip texture if any is broadcast, and the closure window the contractor is committing to based on the data sheet rather than a general estimate.

Q4

What does Section 2 of a coating SDS tell an Ottawa manager?

Section 2 of a Safety Data Sheet sets out the product's hazards.

For a floor coating job in an Ottawa commercial building, Section 2 is the section a manager should read before workers or tenants are anywhere near the work area. Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, s.38(1.1), an employer shall make a copy of the safety data sheet readily available to workers who may be exposed to the product. If your own staff will remain on site during the coating work, ask the contractor for the SDS for every product being applied, including primers, base coats, topcoats and any solvent used for cleanup, and make those sheets available to your staff.

What Section 2 flags depends on the product: Canada's hazardous products rules include classes such as skin sensitiser and respiratory sensitiser, and whether a coating carries one is on its SDS. The hazards vary by product: some epoxy systems, some polyaspartics, some urethane cements and some MMA resins carry different warnings. Read Section 2 of the SDS for the actual product being used, not a generic description of the system type. Section 9 of the same SDS gives the flash point, which tells you whether the product is a flammable liquid and therefore subject to Ontario Fire Code 4.1.5.2, which says open flames, sparks or heat-producing equipment shall not be permitted in an area where flammable or combustible liquids are used unless controlled in a manner that will not create a fire or explosion hazard.

A few things worth checking once you have the SDS in hand:

- Does Section 2 list a respiratory sensitiser? If so, ask the contractor what ventilation and respiratory protection they are providing for their workers, and what your staff in adjacent areas need.
- Does Section 2 list a flammability hazard? If so, confirm that pilot lights, electrical panels and any sparking equipment in or near the work area are addressed before the job starts.
- Does Section 2 list a skin sensitiser? Ask the contractor how they will prevent contact and what to do if a worker or bystander is exposed.

The contractor should supply the SDS before the job starts, not on the day work begins. If they cannot produce it, that is worth resolving before you sign anything.
The right person to ask first is the contractor, because they choose the products and hold the SDS for each one. If the work is in a food preparation area, Ottawa Public Health is the next call, because OPH asks to be notified before significant renovations to a food premises and can tell you whether re-coating your kitchen floor counts as one in your situation.

Q5

What happens if old tile has asbestos in our Hunt Club unit?

If old tile or its black mastic adhesive in your Hunt Club unit may contain asbestos, have it tested before any grinding, shot-blasting or removal work begins. Asbestos is a designated substance in Ontario, and the owner has duties before the project starts.

Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, section 30(1), before a project begins the owner must determine whether any designated substances are present and prepare a list. Section 30(3) requires that list to be given to every prospective contractor before a binding contract is signed. O. Reg. 490/09 lists asbestos among the designated substances. Under section 30(5), an owner who fails to comply is liable to the constructor and every contractor and subcontractor who suffers losses from a designated substance the owner ought reasonably to have known of.

Practically, this means you have the tile and mastic tested before you get floor coating quotes, not after, so every prospective contractor sees the results. If asbestos is confirmed, its removal is governed by its own regulation (O. Reg. 278/05), which we did not research; get advice on it before any floor work is booked.

A few other points worth keeping in mind for your Hunt Club unit:

- The floor coating contractor should provide Safety Data Sheets for every product they plan to use. OHSA section 38(1.1) requires that SDS copies be readily available to workers who may be exposed; if your own staff will be on site during the work, ask for the SDS before work begins and read Section 2 for hazard information.
- Ottawa Public Health asks to be notified when a food premises is being significantly renovated. If your unit is a food premises, ask OPH whether the project, including abatement and re-flooring, triggers that notification before you book anything.

When you have two written floor coating quotes in hand, set them side by side and compare: which products are specified and do the data sheets and Safety Data Sheets come with the quote; what prep method is proposed and what surface profile does the data sheet call for; is a moisture test included and what happens to the price if the slab fails it; how many coats or what thickness does the data sheet require and does the quote match; is cove base included and at what linear footage; what anti-slip texture is specified; and what closure window does the contractor commit to based on the data sheet, not a verbal estimate.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Commercial Epoxy. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa or your own municipality), and Ottawa Public Health for a food premises, before starting any floor coating project. Read the product's data sheet and safety data sheet before work starts. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawacommercialepoxy.ca** for the latest answers.