

# Lane Care Tips

The information in this part of our web site are the views and opinions of Roger Crabill, Resurfacing Manager for Jayhawk Bowling Supply since 1984. We usually recommend bowling centers who are having success with the methods they are currently following in the care of their lanes to continue taking care of their lanes as they have been. Every center is different and when you find something that works great for your center, it is a very good idea to stick with it.

## Lane Types and Surfaces

There are mainly two different types of lane surfaces. One is wood lanes with a coating and the other is synthetic. Within these two types, there are several differences. For wood lanes, there are many different types of liquid lane coatings, plus there a couple of lane coatings that come in rolls which protect the lane surface better than the liquid finishes. For synthetic lanes, while there are many different types, the lane care is similar for the most part. [Brunswick Synthetic Lane Care Manual](#) has a lot of good information for synthetic lane care. Daily lane care for wood lanes and synthetic lanes are actually similar in many ways, but the approach care in some way is very different.

## Resurfacing and Recoating

Resurfacing is when all of the old finish is sanded off to bare wood and the lane is leveled. This should be done about every 18,000 to 24,000 lines of bowling per lane. At this time an oil out treatment is usually required to remove lane conditioner that has soaked into the wood. Depending on how much lane conditioner and how deep it is in the wood, will determine how much oil will be removed with the oil out treatment. When the lanes have been properly resurfaced a new coat of base coat and top coat are applied to the lanes and a coat of approach finish is applied to the approach area.

Recoating is the application of a new clear coat of finish over a lanes existing finish. Recoating doesn't change the appearance of a lane much, it mainly adds a coat of protection to the bowling lane. This procedure consists of removing all of the lane conditioner from a lane and then the lane is screened using either a rotary or an oscillator. Usually either an 80 grit or 100 grit screen is used. Once the lane is screened, the lane is then cleaned with a damp towel to remove the screening dust and then a new coat of finish is applied on top of the old finish. The approach area is done in a similar manner. Lanes should be recoated every 6,000 to 8,000 lines of bowling per lane and approaches can usually go about twice as long between coatings. In fact, in many cases, we usually recommend that as long as your approaches are sliding okay, then just leave them alone.

## Lane Dusting

Lane care starts off with keeping the lanes clean. There are two ways of cleaning, one is with the use of a lane duster and the other is using liquid lane cleaners. Lane dusting use to be a lot more popular, back when centers would clean their lanes with a lane cleaner no more than once per week. The purpose of lane dusting a lane is to remove the dirt and leave the lane conditioner in place. I have always recommended doing this at least three times per day. You should use a lane duster first thing in the morning to remove any dirt that has settled on the lanes overnight, second would be right before lane conditioner is applied and finally at the end of the evening to remove dirt so that it doesn't set in the lane conditioner overnight. It is important when lane dusting, that the person doing this job, not walk on the approaches and not drag any dirt and conditioner onto the approaches. Lane dusting should be done from the pin deck to the foul line and at the foul line, the lane duster should be dragged sideways into the gutters. The dirt that is dragged into the gutters, should then be cleaned up when the gutters are dusted and this too, should not be swept onto the approach area, rather the gutter mops should be shaken over a trash can or cardboard box, placed on the approach at the foul line. Even centers that have lane conditioning equipment that is capable of cleaning the lanes with lane cleaner, should clean with a lane duster first and they will find that their lane machine will do a better job of cleaning. Lanes that are very dirty, can cause dirt to accumulate under the lane cleaner squeegee and thus leave streaks of lane cleaner on the lanes.

### **Approach Cleaning**

Wood approaches usually need very little care. Just daily cleaning using an untreated dust mop or a towel and a maintenance bar several times per day to remove any dust. You can also use a towel with some approach cleaner to remove any spills or shoe marks. Some marks, such as those cause by bowling balls being dropped behind the foul line, tend to be very difficult to remove. Usually, these ball mark can be left alone and will not cause sliding problems for your bowlers. But if you do find it hard to remove a spot, sometimes you might find that using approach cleaner with green scouring pad may help, but keep in mind to use very little pressure on the green pad. This may remove some of the approach finish and if done on a regular bases, could cause sliding problems. A good time to dust approaches would be before and after you have league bowling or a lot of open play. A lot of the dirt that gets on the lane surface actually comes from the approach area, thus keeping the approaches clean can help keep the lane surface cleaner.

### **Lane Cleaning/Stripping**

The next part of lane cleaning, is lane stripping. I recommend doing this at least once per week and it is best to do on the same day each week for consistency. Centers with regular lane finish should keep in mind that water based lane cleaners may cause damage to their wood lanes and finish, especially if the cleaner is left on the lane for very long. Vacuum lane stripping equipment has helped a great deal cutting down the time the lane cleaner is in contact with the lane surface, but on some lanes with regular lane finish, these lane cleaners can get down between the boards and the vacuum

machine is unable to remove this cleaner completely, thus it just sets there and may in some cases, loosen the lane finish. With today's bowling balls requiring large amounts of lane conditioner, this means that the lanes need to be stripped more often and, in many cases, daily, thus this may lead to some finish problems for some centers. There is really no practical answer for this problem unless a center decides to switch to a different type of lane coating, such as Guardian. Guardian is a lane coating film that seals the lane completely, but may over time cause some issues with conditioning and scorability. Guardian should have a life of five to six years and it is usually a very scoreable surface within these years, but since Guardian may still look pretty good after six years, many times its life is extended and then some centers start have problems applying conditioner properly, thus leading to lower scores.

### **Lane Conditioning**

Lane Conditioning is when lane dressing is applied to the bowling lane surface. This is either done by hand or with a lane conditioning machine. It is best that lane conditioner be applied at the same time each day for consistency. The purpose of lane conditioner is to protect the lane surface from the friction that bowling balls creates during impact and to make a good scorable condition for the bowler. I usually recommend applying as little lane conditioner as possible. This means that you need to apply enough to protect the lane surface and give your bowlers a good scorable condition. For example, if you can do this by applying twenty units of conditioner, then don't apply forty units, or if you need forty units, then don't apply eighty units. More is not always better. Making sure your lane surface is in good condition is also important. Now days, many centers may need their lanes either resurfaced or recoated, but instead they just apply more conditioner to compensate for the worn lane surface. This works, but it does cause a lot more oil penetration into the wood and in many cases, this oil contamination may cause permanent damage. When sanding a wood lane that is heavily oil soaked, the grain of the wood will not sand the same because the oil makes it softer and when finish is applied, the finish tends to not have the proper bond. During resurfacing, oil out treatments can help remove some of the oil, but in many cases the oil contamination is just too deep into the wood. The recommended way of applying lane conditioner to create good scoring, is to apply more conditioner in the center of the lane and less on the outsides. USBC does say that where conditioner is applied, there needs to be at least three units to be a legal playing surface.

### **Pin Deck Area**

The pin deck area (pin decks, flat gutters, and kickbacks) tends to take quite a beating and depending on a center's lineage, should be coated with a clear urethane finish anywhere from one to three times per year. The reason for applying these extra coats of finish is to keep the pin decks, flat gutters, kickbacks and kickback plates from wearing. Once the finish is worn through, then the surface underneath wears and becomes damaged. By keeping these areas coated properly, usually the finish is the only part that wears and kickbacks, flat gutters and pin deck can remain in good condition for many years. First this entire area should be cleaned with a cleaner such as Brunswick

Squeaky. I wouldn't recommend a cleaner meant for a vacuum lane stripper because these types of cleaners tend to leave a residue unless they are removed with a vacuum. Next the entire area that is to be coated should be lightly screened with an 80 or 100 grit screen. This can usually be done by hand and this is done to remove any loose finish and to create fine scratches to help the new coat of finish bond to surface. Next the entire area to be coated should be cleaned with a towel lightly dampened with water. Finally, you are ready to coat everything with a clear urethane coating using a paint brush. This finish usually should dry for about eight hours before being bowled on.

### **Lane Repairs**

The last part of lane care is repairing damage areas that happen throughout the year. Some of these repairs are best done at the time of resurfacing, while others can easily be done by the bowling center throughout the year. Sometimes a lane will get spots on the lane where a bowling ball hit on a sharp thumb or finger hole and the finish is cut and torn away to bare wood. These spots are called nickeling and will turn dark when oil and dirt gets in them. The best way to fix these spots is to clean the area around the spot with a lane cleaner, then either with a pocket knife or a piece of sand paper, scrape or sand to clean up these spots and then using a small foam paint brush, coat these areas with three coats of clear urethane. The first coat will dry in a few minutes, then the second coat should dry for about an hour and the finally coat should dry for about eight hours. Cracks in boards can sometimes be fixed by drilling a 7/64" hole through the top of the board near the crack until you drill down into the crack below the surface and then using a Brunswick Injecta-Patch Gun, you can inject the epoxy until it comes to the surface through the crack. Clean off any excess epoxy with a towel and you might find it necessary to set a weight (maybe a bowling ball) on this board to keep it in place. This epoxy will usually dry in 15 minutes. This same epoxy can be used to fill chips on the lanes, approaches and pin decks. These chips can either be filled flush with the surface or you might choose to fill a little higher and then when dry you will need to sand them down. If you choose to sand them down, you might find that it will be necessary to apply a couple of coats of clear urethane to the area around these areas, if you happen to remove any finish when sanding these spots.