

# Protective Supplies FOR REMODELERS

**R**emodeling is a difficult, dangerous, dust-producing process from start to finish. It's a given that you'll need to protect areas of the existing building from dirt, debris, and damage. Newly installed components like plumbing fixtures, interior trim, built-ins, and cabinets should all be put out of harm's way. Sometimes the protection has to be cobbled together on site to suit the applica-

tion, but for many situations, ready-made products can save time and money.

The range of protective products extends from personal to property protection, and includes both disposable and reusable options. To get a handle on what you'll need, review the job specs and your estimating checklist. Performing a preliminary walk-through of the job premises will also alert you to items at risk during construction. Providing for the safety of everything on your list at job startup buys you a little peace of mind, and assures your clients that they've hired a careful and detail-oriented contractor.

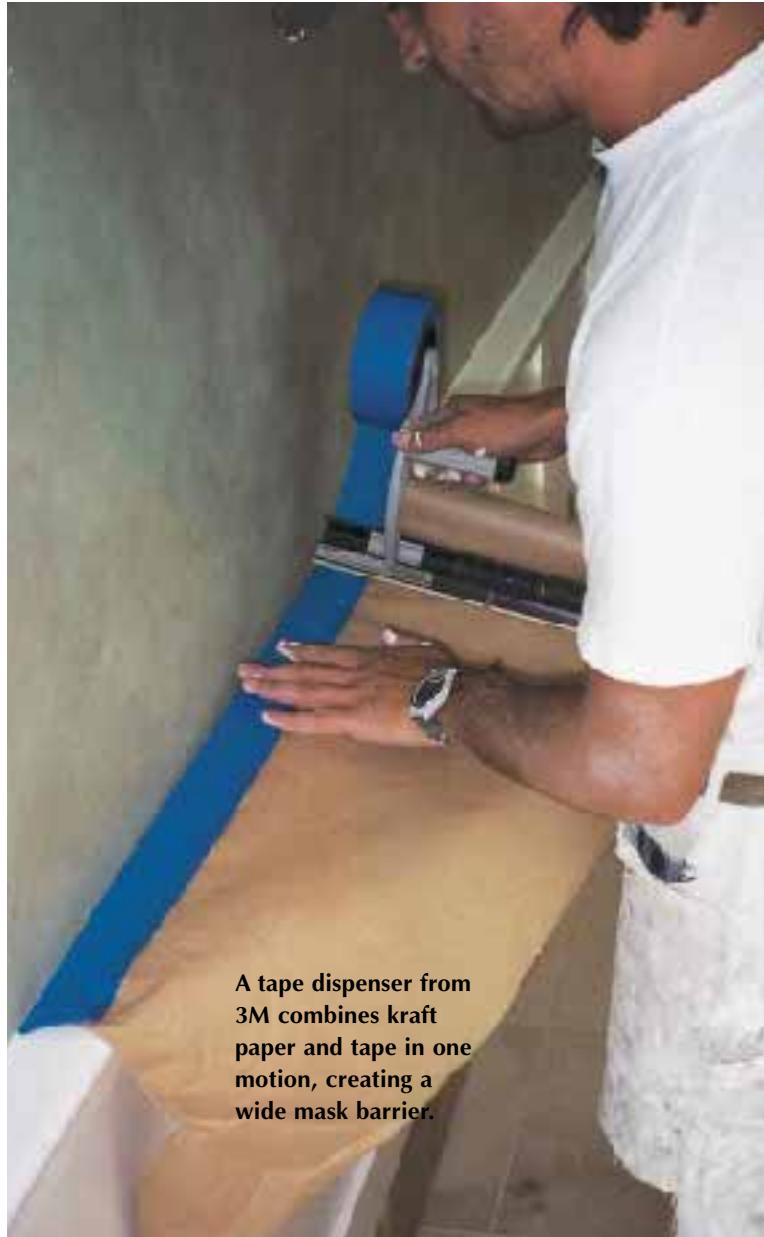
## Start With Insurance

The most important site protection is a good insurance package that includes Contractor's Liability and Workers Comp. In addition, your client should carry a Builder's Risk policy. Check with your insurance agent and an attorney to make sure your coverage is sufficient. Even if local building codes don't make it a requirement, you shouldn't be doing any job without this kind of protection.

An excellent piece of equipment to have on site is a fire extinguisher. More than 3,000 residential fires are started during construction every year in the U.S., usually by a torch during soldering, roofing, or paint stripping operations.

**Ready-to-use property protection is cheap insurance against the hazards of remodeling**

by **JLC Staff**



A tape dispenser from 3M combines kraft paper and tape in one motion, creating a wide mask barrier.



**Figure 1.** Telescoping Curtain Wall poles make short work of dust and paint spray containment in rooms with up to 12-foot ceiling heights.

**Personal property.** It's a good idea to include a clause in your remodeling contract that makes your client responsible for the relocation or removal of furniture and personal property from the construction site. If this isn't feasible, take an inventory and photographs, showing placement of the contents to be removed, and noting preexisting conditions and defects. Present this documentation to the owner with a damage waiver form, and get it signed.

If there's sufficient room on site, renting a large storage container or trailer is an option for temporary storage during construction. Be sure to cover the contents with a tarp or sheeting in case of leaks, and check inside after it rains. You may want to check with the rental agency for warranty against water damage. Another possibility is to hire an insured professional mover to remove and store your clients' possessions.



**Figure 2.** High-quality airtight components and exclusive features like the 4-inch exhaust-duct sleeve make it possible to create a negative-pressure work zone behind the Dust Door.

### **Demolition Means Dust Storms**

Tearing into a structure guarantees a dust storm. You've got any combination of plaster, fiberglass insulation, mineral wool, gypsum, concrete, sawdust, dehydrated rodent droppings, lead paint, vermiculite, and the dust of ages flying around the room and beyond. This stuff settles everywhere, and if you're working on an inhabited building, you'd better keep the mess contained or you're going to hear about it.

You can cut lumber and poly sheeting and rig up partitions yourself, but you'll spend time and money doing it, and probably throw the whole mess out when you're done with it. Plus, chances are you might have to take it down and put it back up during the course of the job. Fortunately, several manufacturers specialize in making short work of throwing up a dust barrier.

**Curtain Wall** has been selling dust containment components since 1991. Its system consists of spring-loaded telescoping steel poles that extend up to 9 feet (12 feet with optional extensions) to support white opaque 4-mil polyethylene sheets. The sheets measure 9 feet 6 inches by 14 feet, and are held to the ceiling with a soft vinyl cup at the top of each pole. The sheets are secured to the poles with a combination of contoured clamps and sleeve clips.

Passage through the curtain is created by overlapping poly sheets at any pole: You just lift the edge of the sheet and walk through, letting the flap fall back into place. You can seal curtain edges against walls by taping; or where adhesive may damage paint, soft contoured-foam gaskets can be used to close the gap between pole and wall. Poles, poly, and all attachments sufficient for a 40-foot wall with a door sell for about \$220. Available options include a cloth duffel bag big enough for 12 poles, and a hardware bag for clamps, fittings, and seals (see Figure 1).

**Dust Door** uses a component system approach to dust containment, in the form of durable yellow reinforced-vinyl add-on panels, available with an integral zipping door (Figure 2). Panels fasten to Velcro strips attached to special gasketed cleats, which are held firmly against the ceiling by telescoping tension poles that extend up to 10 feet. Panels can also hang from Velcro strips adhered to site-built ceiling cleats.

Panels measure 5 feet by 8 feet and 5 feet by 9 feet 6 inches, and interconnect using Velcro strips. Panels can be ordered with custom lettering for a really professional appearance. Dust Door makes a reusable airtight connecting strip for joining standard 4-mil poly sheets to the panels, or sealing the panels to adjacent walls. Optional accessories include a door panel with an elastic-collared 4-inch pipe sleeve for connecting an exhaust duct. This makes it possible to create negative pressure in the enclosure for optimal dust control. Components for a 40-foot by 9-foot-6-inch wall system, including a door, cleats, and Velcro, will cost about \$400, plus the cost of poly sheeting.

**ZipWall** keeps things simple, with telescoping aluminum poles that extend up to 12 feet (Figure 3). A spring-loaded jack with a two-part ceiling plate on one end threads onto the pole. Poly sheeting up to 8 mils thick can be sandwiched between the two layers of the nonslip ceiling plate. The pole secures to the ceiling by spring pressure and locks in place with a quick quarter-turn of the inner pole. After all of the poles are placed, the sheet can be pinned against the floor under each pole by lifting the pole slightly against the spring pressure and sliding the sheet under the foot. ZipWall poles are sold in kits of two for \$139. A new 20-foot-tall version collapses to 6 feet (7 feet with jack), and costs \$189 per kit.

**Do-it-yourself curtains.** For those builders who prefer to make their own dust partitions, Protective Products has a self-adhesive *Zip-Up Door System* (about \$19) for creating a zippered opening through plastic sheeting or tarps. Hanger straps are included to keep the door rolled up and out of the way. Protective Concepts sells a similar item, *Stik N Zip* (\$12), which allows the creation of any shape opening using two zippers.



**Figure 3.** The standard telescoping pole from ZipWall has a 12-foot reach, adjusts easily, and compresses in place to allow the user to trap the bottom edge of the curtain.

**Figure 4.** Self-adhesive films cover hard and soft floor surfaces to prevent scuffing and ground-in dirt. *Floorliner* (left) has a soft cotton backing, and can stay in place up to 120 days. *Protection for carpets from Dust Door* (right) keeps dirt on the surface for easy removal, and can be left in place for up to 45 days.



### Protecting Floors

Floors take a heavy beating during construction. Mud-caked work boots tromping back and forth all day, moving machines and materials around, will antique a wood floor in no time. Rosin paper, tar paper, or poly provide relatively cheap floor covers, but they don't stay put without tape or fasteners, and they don't resist moisture well or stand up for long under heavy use. In short order, you've got a knot of ratty, ripped paper and plastic, labor cost to remove and replace it, and a disposal problem.

To the rescue comes a self-adhesive cotton-padded fiber-reinforced-poly called *Floorliner*. This roll-out nonslip runner from Poly-Tak will absorb a lot of foot traffic, stays put on ceramic tile, hardwood floors and stairs, and protects against accidental paint and chemical spills (Figure 4). Available in 40-inch-wide by 163-foot rolls, it can be cut to fit various shapes and spaces, and is claimed to be reusable, although accumulated construction dust on the adhesive-pad side is likely to interfere with repeat bonding. Poly-Tak also makes 2-mil non-skid poly *Carpet Mask* in rolls of various widths and lengths, and self-adhesive *Floor Mask* for covering hard surfaces like ceramic and natural stone tile. Check with your local distributor for price and availability of Poly-Tak products.

Protective Products makes *Carpet Protection* and *CP-Stair*, tough self-adhesive clear poly membranes for use over carpets and stairways. *Floor Protection* is formulated for vinyl floors and ceramic tile, with a contrasting blue tint to enhance its visibility. It peels up easily when the job's done, just like the company's reusable

*Hardwood Protection*, made specifically for wood floors. All of these films stick to the surface they're rolled out on, so you don't need to tape the edges down.

For longer-term protection and in situations where you don't want an adhesive membrane, Protective Products' *Dura Runner Plus* is a heavier nonstick slip-resistant fabric, available in gray or brown in rolls of 50 and 100 feet. Nathan Kimmel makes a rugged, clear, nonsticking reinforced-poly *Clear Super Floor* tarp, 20x50 feet, that can be reused many times.



**Figure 5.** Rugged tarps serve many uses, including wind screening and dust containment. Nathan Kimmel's durable lightweight tarps are used widely in the plaster and stucco trades.



## Tarps, the Old Standby

A good tarp serves as a two-way barrier, protecting building and materials from wind and weather, and the surrounding area from the dust, dirt, and splatter of construction activity. The universally seen light-duty blue laminated poly tarps do a serviceable job of protecting whatever they cover, but tear easily on sharp corners, in strong wind, or from hard pulling on the grommets. They're usually destined for early retirement, but are a good choice for relatively cheap temporary protection from wind and rain.

Heavy-duty but lightweight tarps from Nathan Kimmel aren't waterproof but work well for containment. They're available in open-weave green or black polypropylene or white ripstop nylon for better wind resistance and heat retention (Figure 5). These tarps have grommets every 3 feet on hemmed edges and come with ropes on the 50-foot sides. If punctured, the fabric resists expansion of the hole. Standard size is 20x50 feet, with custom sizes available. Cost is \$225 for green or black and \$240 for white. Custom letter-and-logo-stenciling is also available.

## Door Mats & Jamb Guards

For the front door, consider using *TakMats* from Protective Products or *Protect Tacky Mats* from Dust Door. Both products grab the dirt from the soles of your shoes, and stay put at the doorway with two-way tape. When the top sheet's played, peel it off to expose a fresh surface. Sixty sheets of either product cost \$58.

Thresholds and hardware can be protected with peel-off PVC tape, available from Protective Concepts, Dust Door, and Protective Products, for around \$20 for two rolls of 6-inch by 108-feet. Moisture-resistant *Shoe Booties*, available from Pro-Tect Associates and Dust Door, fit over regular work boots and prevent scuff marks and tracking. A pack of 25 pairs costs \$7.50 (Figure 6).

**Door-jamb bumpers.** Moving large objects through narrow openings puts exposed jamb edges at risk. Protective Products makes a high-density polyethylene *Jamb Saver* to guard against dings and gouges. The stiff preformed 35-mil cover snaps in place over standard 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch casings, and a soft poly-foam inner backing cushions against impact. The material comes in 45-inch lengths and is sold in boxes of 10 for \$70.

Pro-Tect Associates' rigid plastic *Jamb Protector* snaps into place on jambs from 4 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$  inches wide. The 72-inch lengths can be cut to fit, and cost \$78 for a box of six. Dust Door's lineup includes *ArchGuard*, a clamp-on side-and-head jamb protec-

**Figure 6.** Leave your dirt outside the door with self-adhering mats, protective tape, and disposable booties, all from Dust Door.



**Figure 7.** Dust Door's jamb protector (above) also provides a surface for mounting the dust curtain using Velcro (right).



tor that also serves as a mounting-surface for the company's Velcro-hung zipper door. The kit sells for \$119 (Figure 7).

### Protecting Against Plaster and Paint

Appreciated for the dirty job they do so well, drywallers and plasterers can nonetheless deal death to a tub or shower's surface by standing on it to finish the wall and ceiling above. A lot of tub suppliers ship their units with a cutout panel in the carton for lining the tub bottom, but a dropped screw or nail can be ground into the surface beneath in one step. There are guys who specialize in gouge repair, but a better approach is to apply a dedicated barrier for the duration of the job.

One option is to line the tub with Protective Products' cut-to-fit *Pro Tecta Tub Kit* (\$50), a reusable mat made of tough 30-mil foam-backed plastic. The backing cushions against impact, and generates enough friction to keep the mat from sliding around. *Floorliner* performs well in this application, too, according to a Poly-Tak spokesperson.

Tubs, showers, and other bath fixtures can be spray- or brush-coated with a liquid latex film, which cures to a durable protective "skin" on the fixture's surface (Figure 8). Dust Door, Protective Concepts, and Protective Products all offer versions of this blue-tinted compound, which peels off easily after the job's completed.

**Paint masking.** A trip to any well-stocked paint supply store will present you with a broad array of masking papers, tapes, and dispensers. *EasyMask*, from DCP-Lohja, is a broad line of masking papers, plastics, and tapes. 3M has an equally varied line of similar masking products, and some clever dispensers that combine paper and tape in one swipe.



**Figure 8.** Liquid coatings that cure to form a rubbery film are a good way to protect vulnerable, irregular-shaped plastic and porcelain tub surfaces. Liquid Mask from ProTect is shown here.



**Figure 9.** Painters swear by self-dispensing QuickMask pretaped drop cloths. They are available in kraft and poly in several widths at painting supply stores.

In the category of "really nifty" is HomeRight's *Quick Mask* paper or poly drop cloths, which have a pre-applied tape along one edge. Folded on the roll, they unfurl to their final width after placement. Available with a handy, palm-sized self-dispenser in 7-inch and 21-inch widths for \$6.50 and \$8 respectively, they make short work of paint prep (Figure 9).

Cover window glazing with Protective Products' *Glass Protection*, a clear plastic film with low-tack adhesion, and you can (carefully) kiss your paint-scraping razor goodbye. Another option is *Protect Multi-Use Red* from Dust Door, a 2-mil red transparent polyethylene film for covering hard surfaces, flat or vertical (Figure 10). Protective Concepts makes a "long-term" blue PVC film with an acrylic adhesive, for glass and nonporous surface protection. Available in 12- or 24-inch widths, it can be applied with the company's *Glass Dispenser* and left in place for up to 180 days. Poly-Tak's *Window Mask* is a clear 2-mil low-tack poly film for use over glass, aluminum, and finished metal.

Masking tape will never die, but you might before you get it all unstuck. UV seems to activate the adhesive into hyperbond mode, after which you can only get the tape off in annoying little slivers, leaving a trail of dried adhesive on the very surface you're trying to protect. Before you buy, read the print inside the roll for recommended stick times: It's typically no more than 4 hours for standard tape and 24 hours for painter's grade.

Extended-exposure tapes, formulated to resist UV effects, are manufactured by a few companies, and are typically blue in color. *Long-Mask* from 3M is designed for exposure up to seven days. This is handy for outdoor jobs, where the sun fuses the regular stuff in no time. Curtain Wall supplies seven-day UV-resistant *Shurtape*, and



**Figure 11.** Masking tape goes on quickly and accurately with a dispenser. Use an easy-peel UV-resistant product like *Shurtape* for exposure up to 7 days.



**Figure 10.** Static-clinging thin plastic films like Dust Door's *MultiUse Red* or Poly-Tak's *Window Mask* are excellent for protecting glazing or cabinets from paint splatters.



**Figure 12.** A confirmed favorite in the stucco and plaster trades, Nathan Kimmel's "Red" and "Yellow" tapes are specifically designed for aluminum and wood/vinyl protection, respectively. They're both low-tack and moisture-proof.

the *SD-934* tape dispenser. For speedy and accurate large-scale or repeat masking jobs, a tape dispenser is, well, indispensable, and worth the price (Figure 11). 3M makes the *Hand-Masker Dispenser* and the *Moulding Masker Tape Applicator*. Their *Dual-Tac Tape Dispenser*, which automatically laminates an orange draping-tape to masking tape, pays out a double-sided tape for hanging 2-mil plastic sheeting, making quick work of over-spray masking. Again, watch the stick time. Left on too long, you'll be pulling the paint off with the tape.

Specifically for anodized aluminum sash, Nathan Kimmel has developed its red waterproof cloth *MetalMask* tape, primarily for EIFS masking (Figure 12). This stuff can be left on for a month or longer without transferring adhesive to the metal surface. The company's yellow *VinylMask* has a low-tack adhesive for use on wood and painted surfaces, is waterproof, and can also be left on for extended periods of time. Painters also use low-tack adhesive-coated kraft paper masking tape, such as 3M's *ReadyMask*, which has an adhesive strip along one edge of the roll only, leaving a wide skirt of paper hanging free. The adhesive is similar to that used on sticky-note pads, and pulls away easily from the surface after painting or caulking. Both 3M and DCP-Lohja, makers of the *EasyMask* product line, offer a variety of masking materials and equipment too extensive to list here.

**Drop cloths.** Plastic sheeting's okay for a drop cloth, but cloth, typically canvas, can't be beat for long-term quality and economy. Canvas lays down easy and stays put, relaxes into corners, folds up easily, comes in lots of sizes, and lasts for years. Many painters prefer canvas drop cloths, especially when working with oil-based coatings and solvents, which make a sticky mess on plastic sheeting. Covering shrubs and plantings around a house with canvas during paint stripping and demolition operations keeps foliage free of debris, and prevents breakage. Plastic sheeting doesn't allow plants to breathe, and can kill by overheating.

Alongside its intended use as a gardening row-cloth, *Typar Landscape Fabric*, from Reemay, makes an excellent plant cover. It allows light, air, and moisture to get to plants, while keeping them safe from bombardment and crushing. It also doesn't blow around in a light breeze the way plastic does.



## Sources of Supply

**3M Home Improvement Products**  
St. Paul, Minn.  
800/364-3577  
[www.mmm.com](http://www.mmm.com)

**Curtain Wall Co.**  
Cranston, R.I.  
800/424-8251  
[www.curtain-wall.com](http://www.curtain-wall.com)

**DCP-Lohja Inc.**  
*EasyMask Products*  
Willowbrook, Ill.  
800/634-1303  
[www.easymask.com](http://www.easymask.com)

**Diversified Dynamics Corp.**  
*HomeRight*  
Minneapolis, Minn.  
800/547-3753  
[www.homeright.com](http://www.homeright.com)

**Brophy Design**  
*Dust Door*  
Boylston, Mass.  
800/781-6111  
[www.dustdoor1.com](http://www.dustdoor1.com)

**Nathan Kimmel Co.**  
Los Angeles, Calif.  
213/627-8556  
[www.nathankimmel.com](http://www.nathankimmel.com)

**Poly-Tak Protection Systems**  
Huntington Beach, Calif.  
800/899-0871  
[www.polytak.com](http://www.polytak.com)

**Pro-Tect Assoc.**  
1742 Harding Rd.  
Northfield, IL 60093  
800/545-0826  
[www.pro-tect.com](http://www.pro-tect.com)

**Protective Concepts**  
Princeton, Texas  
800/715-1299  
[www.protectiveconcepts.com](http://www.protectiveconcepts.com)

**Protective Products**  
Wauconda, Ill.  
800/789-6633  
[www.protectiveproducts.com](http://www.protectiveproducts.com)

**Reemay**  
Old Hickory, Tenn.  
800/321-6271  
[www.reemay.com](http://www.reemay.com)

**ZipWall**  
Cambridge, Mass.  
800/718-2255  
[www.zipwall.com](http://www.zipwall.com)