

# REFINISHING WOOD FLOORS SAFELY

To protect yourself, your family  
and your neighbors, choose a  
water-based polyurethane product  
and follow the manufacturer's  
instructions carefully.



**DIAL  
311**

*For Other Healthy Homes Guides*

*Choose and Use the  
Right Polyurethane*



*A Healthy Homes Guide*



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EHS1324051 - 05.07





## Many people use polyurethane coatings to seal and protect hardwood floors.

All polyurethanes contain chemicals that can be hazardous. To protect yourself, your family and your neighbors:

- Choose the right product for home use.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully.
- Use adequate ventilation.
- Both workers and do-it-yourselfers should use proper protective equipment, such as masks and gloves.
- If you hire a professional, discuss the recommendations in this brochure.

## How do I know which product to buy?

Three types of polyurethanes are commonly available. Some types are safer than others.

### Types of Polyurethanes

	Water-Based	Oil-Based	Moisture-Cure
Odors	Mild	Strong	Strong
Drying time	2 to 3 hours	3 to 8 hours	4 to 16 hours, depending on humidity
Fire Hazard	Low	Medium	High

Individual products may differ. For more information, ask the product manufacturer or distributor for a material safety data sheet (MSDS).

Use the chart to compare them. Individual products vary widely in durability, color and ease of application.

## What's wrong with oil-based or moisture-cure urethanes?

Until they dry, these products release strong odors into the air that contain dangerous substances, such as toluene diisocyanate, xylene, ethyl benzene, naphtha and other petroleum distillates.

Even short contact with elevated levels of oil-based and moisture-cure urethane in the air may affect your health by:

- Triggering asthma attacks.
- Irritating eyes, nose and throat.
- Causing headache and dizziness.

## Not recommended for use in occupied buildings!

Odors from oil-based and moisture-cure urethanes spread easily from room to room and even apartment to apartment. The odors can last for several days.

To protect yourself, your family and your neighbors:

- **Don't apply** oil-based or moisture cure urethanes in an occupied house, apartment or building.
- Stay out of your home for 2 days after the product is applied or until odors lessen.