

Solutions to Eliminate or Prevent SleekTEAK Air Bubbles

Primary Causes:

Air bubbles are typically caused by one or more of the following:

- Outgassing from new fiberglass decks when heated by sunlight.
- Trapped air during installation.
- Inadequate surface bonding due to low surface energy or moisture.

Surface Preparation is Critical

1. Prepare the Surface Properly

- Clean the deck thoroughly using **acetone or isopropyl alcohol** (90% or higher). Ensure all oils, dust, waxes, and contaminants are removed.
- **Preheat the deck** with **IR (Infra-Red) lamps** or sunlight before install to drive off latent gases, if not use a heat gun to heat the surface!
- For new fiberglass, lightly scuff-sand (180–220 grit) to open surface pores and improve adhesion.
- Ensure the surface is completely dry before applying SleekTEAK.

2. Use an Adhesive Primer

- Apply a thin, even layer of 3M™ Primer 94 or equivalent to the installation area.
- Allow primer to dry completely (typically 5–10 minutes) before applying the decking.
- This seals the substrate and dramatically improves bond strength and resistance to bubbles.

3. Condition the Environment

- Install in the morning or late afternoon to avoid extreme heat.
- Avoid installing in direct sunlight when the surface temperature exceeds 85°F (29°C).

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4. Apply SleekTEAK with Pressure



- Begin applying SleekTEAK from one end outward to minimize trapping air rolling SleekTEAK on to the deck while pressing into place.
- Carefully remove the backing gradually as you lay SleekTEAK onto the deck—do not remove it all at once. Instead of pulling straight back, pull low and in the direction of the remaining film.
- Use a soft rubber roller or laminate roller, applying firm pressure (at least 15 lbs.) to activate the adhesive and bond securely.

Note on New Boats & Off-Gassing

- If less than 8 months old pre-heat the surface briefly with a heat gun and it's best to use infra-red lights, or under sunlight prior to install to release latent gases.

Aftercare

- Avoid exposing the installed area to direct sunlight or heavy use for 24 hours to allow full adhesive bonding.
- If bubbles appear later, puncture with a fine needle,(buy on amazon) press flat, and warm gently to rebond

Air bubbles have long been a common issue with any deck covering adhered to boat surfaces. However, by following these recommended practices, you can significantly reduce—or even eliminate—the risk of air bubbles forming.