

GOODBYE TO THE BUCKET AND BRUSH

by Gerry Zierler

You may have noticed the grey frames steadily appearing around the Underground network, enclosing the poster sites. Indeed, some LURS members have already commented in *Underground News* about these being installed on top of recently renovated tiling. So, what's the reason?

LUL's poster contractor, CBS Outdoor, is now close to completing its programme of switching from wet-posting of advertisement posters (buckets, brushes and glue) to a new system using a synthetic paper in conjunction with a double-sided adhesive tape. The advantages of modern paper allow for greening of the process and exploitation of modern printing processes, which it is hoped will appeal to the advertisers and their agencies.

The synthetic paper was developed by the German paper mill Neenah Lahnstein who specialise in papers for the wallpaper industry. As the paper is to be used exclusively on the London Underground, Neenah Lahnstein has now rebranded the paper to CBS Outdoor Performance.

Because Performance paper has synthetic fibres and a low cellulous content it is more robust and dimensionally-stable than traditional poster papers and as such, can resist moisture as well as withstand the severe ranges in temperature and humidity that can be experienced on the London Underground.

'Dry-posting' with Performance paper is also a greener proposition because the elimination of paste, with its harmful chemicals, now means that the posters can be recycled when the advertising campaigns are finished. The preferred method of printing the Performance paper is with UV inks which, again are more environmentally-friendly than wet-posted posters which can only be printed with solvent inks. The elimination of paste and the use of UV inks now mean that the posters can be recycled as fuel instead of going to landfill sites.

The introduction of UV inks also give the posters an added lift and allows the advertiser to be more creative with their designs as they can now use a wider range of print finishes, including: metallic inks, embossing and gloss & matt varnishes – none of which cannot be used on wet-posted posters. Stand by for posters with bubbling beer and scary glistening vampires!

Spike Hallissey, Head of Production at CBS Outdoor in Camden Town (and still next door to his old London Transport Advertising offices) has had the unenviable task of selling-in the idea of a more expensive paper to advertisers, at a time of reduced budgets. However, the advantages in terms of improved overall appearance, better print quality, proven green credentials and cleanliness is thought to outweigh the increased production costs.

The cleanliness of the new system is most noticeable on the 48 and 16 sheet across-track posters, where the traditional goo of residual glue and muck at the bottom has gone, probably to the disappointment of thousands of hungry Tube mice.

So how does it work? The new powder-coated aluminium frames are 'dressed-out' using a 3M double-sided adhesive tape. The tape is a polyester construction with a permanent adhesive on the reverse and a removable adhesive on the front which is protected by a carrier sheet. The tape is applied to the aluminium backing panel with the use of a squeegee, the permanent adhesive being applied to the backing panel. The carrier sheet is then removed revealing the removable adhesive; the printed poster is then applied to the removable adhesive, again with a squeegee. Once each section of the poster has been applied the edges are then tucked-down behind the frame to ensure that no wind gets behind the poster.

The new dry-posting system eliminates the need to over-post campaigns one-on-top-of-another which used to result in an untidy mess with 'flapping' posters. The new system means that once a campaign is finished the posters can be removed and a new set of posters applied thus giving a much-improved look to the cross-track walls. Posters can be applied and removed for a number of months before the site has to be stripped completely and fresh tape applied.

Because the Performance paper is moisture-resistant, the occasional problem of 'cockling' or bubbling of the paper has now been eliminated. Interestingly this was caused by rapid climatic changes, largely because of the rapid movements of air created by passing trains. The same

materials are used for the smaller 12 and 4 Sheet posters on platforms. Like Escalator Panels and Tube Car Panels, all materials are proven to be fire-retardant after a series of tests.

Surprisingly, there was no special requirement on CBS Outdoor regarding positioning of these frames, so there has been no coordination to avoid occasional unfortunate placing on any replacement or 'heritage' tiling. Although about 80% of below-ground stations are being converted, there will be some that can't be done because of out-of-gauge problems. It seems that even the thickness of a frame can make a difference to train space.

It will be interesting to see if the neatness of the new frames and greater creative variety will be appreciated by the public – and our members.