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Topic Hub: Metal Finishing Subsection : Background and Overview

For the purpose of this information resource, the metal finishing industry refers to businesses that apply paints and coatings to metal surfaces. This includes processes that apply paint through spray applications, chemical baths, electro-deposition, and other mechanical applications.

There are two types of businesses engaged in metal finishing - 1) independent metal finishers commonly referred to as "job shops" or "independent metal finishers"; and 2) "captive" metal finishers who conduct metal finishing processes as part of a larger manufacturing operation.

Captive operations may be more specialized in their operations, but their metal finishing processes tend to be more efficient because they are processing a limited number of different parts. In other words, they know what they will finish every day and are more likely to fine-tune their equipment to meet those daily requirements. Consequently, when a process is running at optimum efficiency then less waste will be generated.

Job Shops tend to be less specialized in their operations because they may have many customers, often with different specifications and quality requirements. The need for operational flexibility to meet customer requirements often limits the choices of alternative, more environmentally preferred processes.

Although the two business segments may have different operating structures, the technologies used to finish parts are the same and consequently have similar environmental impacts.

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