

THE WD-40 STORY:

Surely, at one time or another, you have reached for a can of WD-40 in the process of working on a car or fixing something around the house. Have you ever thought about how WD-40 got its name?

The WD-40 moniker goes back in time to 1953 in San Diego, California. Norm Larsen, a self-taught industrial chemist and his staff of three at the “Rocket Chemical Company” were trying to come up with a solvent which displaced water for the aerospace industry. It took Norm and his staff 40 tries before they perfected the formula. Hence, the name, Water Displacement on the 40th attempt.

WD-40 was first used by Convair, the aerospace contractor, to protect the skin of their prototype Atlas Rockets from rust and corrosion. At first, WD-40 was only produced in liquid form. The aerosol cans first made their appearance on store shelves in San Diego in 1958. Oddly enough, WD-40 was never patented so the proprietary ingredients could remain a secret from their competition. The company website (www.wd40.com) has an MSDS (material safety data sheet); however, the MSDS information is primarily for the workplace and not the general user. For the general consumer, the product label on the can has the key safety information.

Norm Larsen sold the Rocket Chemical Company and WD-40 in the mid-fifties for a mere \$10,000.00 (no royalties, no residuals) as he believed he could invent something even better. In 1969, the company was renamed after its only product, WD-40 Company, Inc. A fascinating fact about WD-40's history is the testimonial letters to the company sharing the many uses for the product. There is a WD-40 book featuring user testimonials and wacky humor. You can even join the WD-40 Fan Club, which now boasts over 100 thousand members. Norm Larsen went on to invent a hand cream, a hair restorer, and “Green Giant Udder Ointment”, a petroleum jelly based ointment that was used to heal cow's udders from the chaffing of milking machines. This ointment turned out to be an excellent healer for burns and wounds. While working for CRC, Norm Larsen invented CRC 5.56, a penetrating fluid. Norm Larsen was only 47 years old when he died in 1970 and WD-40 remains his most famous invention.....Happy Motoring.....*Ron Couturier*