



“Easy on the Knees!”



By Scott Burt

With fall in the air, one of the small details that I start thinking about is getting soft goods ordered for winter. Like many companies, we go through a lot of T-shirts in the summer and have a new round of long-sleeve T-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, etc., for winter. It's a constant part of the marketing budget that varies with the seasons.

During this round of preparing for the seasonal stock-up, I stumbled upon an item that I hadn't previously considered: a better pair of work pants. In our company, the crew has diverse opinions about wearing traditional painter's whites. I have one guy who will only wear whites.

He is skinny; they fit him well and look good. Other guys on the crew don't like the way they look or fit and are not comfortable wearing them. That being the case, we have many different types of work pants from different manufacturers that have become part of "our look" on the job.

There is a new brand of work pants on the market, designed and built specifically for painters: Armed Professional Work Wear. The company was founded in 2007 by Josh Banks, a professional painter in Salt Lake City, Utah. Finally, a pair of painter's pants actually thought out and designed by someone with years of experience in our field. I suspect that many work pants put out by larger manufacturers are conceptualized by people who don't have hands-on experience in the trades. This company is different, and their products are too.

I happen to fall into the category of painters who have never been completely comfortable wearing traditional painter's whites. Honestly, most of my days in the field have been spent in Carhart (pants designed more for carpenters than for painters). You know the feeling; you stick your putty knife in your back pocket and it ends up sideways and bent. Put your 5-in-1 into your hip pocket, hop in your truck, and poke a hole in the pants or the seat. Slip a nail set into any pocket, and who knows where it may end up. After painting a lot of baseboards for a season or two, the knees slowly wear away. And oops, you're 24 feet up on the extension ladder and your dust brush falls out. The Armed pants have clearly been put together by someone who has experienced all this. I was intrigued by the look of the pants and the company's marketing presentation, so I called the company and ordered up enough pants for my crew.

Armed Professional Work Wear thinks of their product as more of a tool than a soft good. Having tested them, I am inclined to agree. While the pants are as stylish and comfortable as work pants can be, it is more their function that is impressive. First off, the pants have nine built-in pockets that are strategically located with painters in mind and specifically sized to house the hand tools and other items that painters most commonly need to carry- 5-in-1, dust brush, nail set, putty knife, screwdriver, cell phone, MP3, small notepad- and a hammer loop that serves as a perfect rag loop. It is like having a tool belt on, but without the bulk. The pocket orientation is such that you can kneel down, go up and down ladders, and work on the roof or floor without sitting on the tools in your pockets or worrying about them falling out.

Most important, the pants have pocket inserts for kneepads. This was the feature that my crew liked best. We do a lot of new construction painting, which means we are

working on subfloors, unsanded/unfinished floors, and slate tile or concrete floors and doing so in a working environment. Not to mention the exterior surfaces our knees spend time on – stone work, ipe decking, shingle roofs or just plain rough grade- all substrates that are hard on knees and pants. I can personally tell you the type of pain that accompanies kneeling down on a random sheetrock screw or pebble. I can also tell you how uncomfortable traditional strap-on kneepads are. I have never in my life found a pair that I liked. They make you sweat in strange ways; they are bulky, cut off circulation on the backsides of your knees and so much more. It seems like such a simple idea to create a pocket at the knees with removable pads that slide in and out with ease. The pads are lightweight and soft. You really won't even notice that they are in there. The knee pockets have enough space to double up the pads for long days of baseboard, floor or stair work. Ever spend a day sanding a deck? These

pants seem to be able to make the most miserable finishing task more bearable.

Armed Professional Work Wear is putting out a great product at a competitive price point. The pants range from \$35 to 39 depending on the color you select. This is a good investment, given the benefits. The value of these pants lies in the ability to carry all the necessary hand tools effortlessly, and the safety benefit of serious and comfortable kneepads. Anytime a tool will gain my company efficiency and safety in one shot, I have to take a look. Armed Professional Work Wear has hit the mark.

Coming next month: my review of the Graco ProShot cordless airless sprayer. **APC**

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