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# EPOXY RESINS



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Michael Dornbusch

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# **Epoxy Resins**

## **Fundamentals and Applications**

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.1	History .....	11
1.2	Applications for epoxy resins .....	13
1.2.1	Coatings .....	13
1.2.2	Construction materials.....	14
1.2.3	Adhesives .....	15
1.3	Terms and markets.....	15
1.3.1	Nomenclature .....	15
1.3.2	Markets .....	16
1.4	Literature.....	19
<b>2</b>	<b>Basic chemistry of the epoxy group.....</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1	Properties and reactions of epoxy groups.....	21
2.1.1	Reactions with nucleophiles .....	22
2.1.2	Acid-catalysed reactions .....	29
2.1.3	Properties of the epoxy group.....	34
2.2	Production and properties of epoxy resins.....	38
2.2.1	Production and properties of the monomers.....	38
2.2.1.1	Epichlorohydrin .....	38
2.2.1.2	Bisphenols .....	39
2.2.1.3	Epoxides based on olefins .....	45
2.2.1.4	Glycidyl esters.....	47
2.2.1.5	Aliphatic glycidyl ethers .....	47
2.2.2	Production and properties of the oligomers.....	47
2.2.2.1	Bisphenol-based epoxy resins .....	47
2.2.2.2	Epoxy novolaks.....	56
2.3	Key parameters of epoxy resins.....	59
2.3.1	Epoxy equivalent of epoxy resins .....	59
2.3.2	Hydroxyl value of epoxy resins.....	62
2.3.3	Chloride content of epoxy resins .....	63

2.3.4	Determining the tendency of liquid resins to crystallise.....	65
2.3.5	Detection reactions .....	65
2.4	Structure and properties of polymers based on epoxy resins and their curing processes .....	66
2.4.1	Polyether polyols and phenoxy resins .....	66
2.4.2	Polyether polyols with epoxy groups .....	68
2.4.2.1	Catalytic curing of epoxy resins .....	69
2.4.3	Waterborne epoxy resins.....	89
2.4.4	Resins for hybrids with polymers based on epoxy resins .....	92
2.4.4.1	Epoxy acrylate .....	92
2.4.4.2	Epoxy alkyd, epoxy ester .....	94
2.4.4.3	Epoxy-siloxane/silicone .....	94
2.4.4.4	Epoxy-polyamideimide.....	96
2.5	Literature.....	96
<b>3</b>	<b>Epoxides in coatings.....</b>	<b>101</b>
3.1	Epoxy groups as crosslinked building blocks.....	101
3.1.1	Overview of epoxy resins and hardeners .....	101
3.1.2	Epoxy groups in UV-curable coating systems .....	101
3.1.3	Epoxy groups in dip-coatings .....	109
3.2	Protective coatings.....	118
3.2.1	Industrial coatings.....	119
3.2.2	Corrosion protection .....	125
3.2.2.1	Heavy duty corrosion protection.....	143
3.2.2.2	Standardized corrosion protection.....	145
3.3	Applied flooring technology .....	171
3.3.1	Concrete .....	171
3.3.2	Application of epoxy thermosets for ambient cure condition.....	172
3.3.3	Floor design and installation.....	174
3.3.4	Industrial flooring performance attributes.....	176
3.3.5	High performance industrial flooring .....	182
3.4	Powder coatings .....	185
3.4.1	Epoxy powder coatings .....	187
3.4.1.1	Curing with dicyandiamide (DICY).....	187

---

3.4.1.2	Curing with phenolic resins .....	190
3.4.1.3	Curing with anhydrides .....	190
3.4.2	Epoxy polyester powder coatings or hybrid powder coatings.....	191
3.4.3	Polyester powder coatings.....	193
3.4.4	Acrylic powder coatings .....	195
3.5	Can and coil coatings.....	197
3.5.1	Can coatings.....	197
3.5.2	Coil coatings .....	201
3.6	Literature.....	205
<b>4</b>	<b>Trends and outlook.....</b>	<b>217</b>
4.1	Legal requirements related to health, safety and environmental protection.....	217
4.2	New product developments .....	218
4.2.1	Epoxy resins – applicable in future also for topcoats .....	219
4.2.2	New waterbased 1pack-epoxy technology for high duty corrosion protection systems.....	219
4.2.3	Improving the corrosion protection of 2pack-epoxy coatings by active anti-corrosion and barrier pigments.....	220
4.2.4	Trends in epoxy-based powder coatings .....	222
4.3	Potential replacement of BPA in the can coatings industry.....	223
4.3.1	Replacing BPA with derivatives of bisphenol A .....	223
4.3.2	Replacing BPA with new epoxy compounds .....	224
4.3.3	Replacing BPA with other resin types .....	225
4.4	Epoxides as building blocks for use of anthropogenic carbon dioxide for chemical syntheses .....	226
4.5	Outlook – a strong growth predicted for epoxy resins.....	226
4.6	Literature.....	227
	<b>Authors.....</b>	<b>229</b>
	<b>Index.....</b>	<b>231</b>

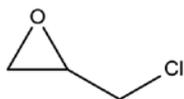


# 1 Introduction

**Michael Dornbusch**

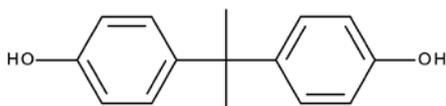
## 1.1 History

The history of epoxy resins began in 1854 when *Berthelot* first prepared epichlorohydrin by making glycerol react with phosphorus trichloride <sup>[19–21]</sup>.



*Equation 1.1: Chloromethyl oxirane (epichlorohydrin)*

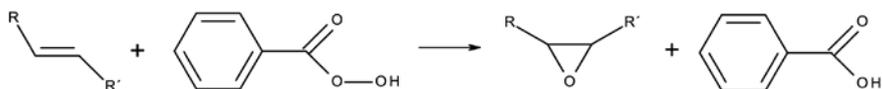
The next step occurred in 1891 with the first description of 2,2-bis(4-hydroxyphenyl)-propane (bisphenol A) by *Dianin* <sup>[2]</sup>, who produced the impure compound <sup>[10]</sup>.



*Equation 1.2: 2,2-Bis-(4-hydroxyphenyl)-propane (bisphenol A)*

Sixteen years later, in 1905, Zincke in Marburg, Germany, synthesised pure bisphenol A (BPA) from acetone and phenol <sup>[10]</sup>.

In 1909, the Russian chemist *Prilezhaev* converted numerous olefins into epoxides by reaction with peroxybenzoic acid <sup>[8, 22]</sup>.



*Equation 1.3: Preparation of epoxides, according to Prilezhaev<sup>[22]</sup>*

A patent published in the same year by *Horn* <sup>[9]</sup> claimed protection for a protein-based coating formulation, which was obtained by mixing epichlorohydrin and proteins, e.g. protalbin or albumose, in a ratio of 1 : 1 in an alcoholic solution. When

linseed oil was added to this solution, no turbidity occurred. This was probably the first patent for an epoxy-based coating formulation.

The most-commonly cited inventor of epoxy resins is *Schlack*<sup>[15]</sup>, who claimed protection in his patent for I.G. Farben in 1934 for the reaction between bisphenol A and epichlorohydrin to yield epoxy resins<sup>[3, 8]</sup>. The resins were cured with ethylene diamine. Thereafter, the coatings industry intensified its development activities in the field of epoxy resins.

Patents obtained by *Castan* in 1938 for the company De Trey AG, Switzerland, described the production of a resin, which was based on BPA and epichlorohydrin and was cured with phthalic anhydride. This curing process was done stepwise to yield pre-cured casting resins, which cured after application<sup>[5]</sup>.

De Trey AG produced epoxy-based resins for dental applications<sup>[3]</sup> but was unable to bring the products to market<sup>[18]</sup>.

Also in 1938, *Stein and Flemming* from I.G. Farben patented an improved synthesis for epichlorohydrin<sup>[17]</sup> that facilitated the commercialisation of epoxy resins by substantially boosting the yield.

In 1939, *Bock and Tischbein* from I.G. Farben<sup>[14]</sup> patented the reaction between diepoxides and polyamides and used the resulting compounds for textile applications.

A patent by *Castan* in 1943 described the use of catalytic quantities of bases to effect curing<sup>[6]</sup>. In the USA in the same year, *Greenlee*<sup>[16]</sup> patented the resin obtained from the reaction of BPA with epichlorohydrin and its use for coating applications, thereby laying the foundations of the industrial use of epoxy resins in that country.

Industrial production of bisphenol A from acetone and phenol started after 1945 (1946 according to<sup>[18]</sup>)<sup>[2]</sup>. In Europe, Ciba AG developed products under patent licence from De Trey AG that it sold under the trade name Araldite while, independently in the USA, the Devoe & Reynolds Company developed similar products<sup>[3]</sup>.

Commercialisation of the resins by Ciba AG in Europe and by the US companies mentioned above led to a continuous rise in epoxy resin production after 1947<sup>[8]</sup>.

In the late 1940s, Shell and Bakelite Co. (later: Union Carbide Corp.) commenced R&D activities in the field of BPA-based epoxy resins<sup>[18]</sup>. At that time, Shell was the sole producer of epichlorohydrin and Bakelite was one of the largest producers of phenolic resins and BPA<sup>[18]</sup>.

In the 1950s, BPA was also used to produce polycarbonate<sup>[2]</sup>, and this increased global production of BPA.

In 1955, a cross-licensing agreement among the four US producers of epoxy resins saw Dow Chemical Co. and Reichold Chemicals Inc. enter the market when they joined the patent pool<sup>[18]</sup>.

In the 1960s, the range of epoxy resins on the market surged dramatically. Ciba AG produced epoxidised o-cresol-novolak resins, Dow Chemical Co. offered epoxidised phenol-novolak resins, Shell introduced multiply epoxidised tetra-functional phenols and Union Carbide entered the market with multiply functionalised epoxides in the form of triglycidised p-aminophenols<sup>[18]</sup>.

Also in the 1960s, Ciba AG in Europe and Union Carbide in the USA established industrial production methods for the epoxidation of olefins with peracetic acid by the Prilezhaev reaction. Ciba AG launched cycloaliphatic epoxy resins onto the market in 1963, following these up with additional products in 1965 based on licences obtained from Union Carbide<sup>[18]</sup>.

Finally, in the 1970s, Ciba-Geigy AG developed epoxy resins based on hydantoin and Shell developed resins based on hydrated bisphenol A, but both product groups had little success on the market<sup>[18]</sup>.

The hormonal activity of BPA, now considered a toxicological property, has a historical background, too<sup>[4]</sup>. The British chemists *Dodds* and *Lawson*<sup>[11, 12]</sup> were searching in 1936 for chemicals that would make suitable replacements for natural oestrogen in medical treatments.

A bio-assay revealed that bisphenol A was a substance with a weak oestrogenic effect. It was then discovered that derivatives such as diethylstilbestrol<sup>[13]</sup> were much more potent and so BPA never found use as a drug<sup>[7]</sup>. These results have since been confirmed several times<sup>[4]</sup>, but there is controversy surrounding the implications.

## 1.2 Applications for epoxy resins

Outstanding properties, such as resistance to humidity and chemicals, good adhesion to numerous substrates, and good mechanical properties combine to make epoxy resins versatile construction materials and coating agents<sup>[18]</sup>.

Applications for epoxy resins can be divided into three areas:

- Coatings
- Adhesives
- Construction materials.

A rough overview of these is given below.

### 1.2.1 Coatings

The best known application in this area is likely to be that of heavy duty corrosion protection (see Section 3.2)<sup>[8]</sup>. Major examples here include shipbuilding, offshore, and engineering structures, such as bridges, with solvent-borne, water-borne and solvent-free coatings, cured with various amines, being used in all areas<sup>[8]</sup>.

The automotive industry uses resins based on epoxy-amine adducts that have been produced from epoxy resins (see Section 3.1.3). Resins bearing amine groups can be protonated and the resulting cationic particles deposited by means of cathodic polarisation on a workpiece<sup>[8]</sup> and cured with blocked isocyanates at 170 to 190 °C, i.e. they can be covalently crosslinked. This cathodic electrodeposition coating (or E-coating) process provides the corrosion protection found on modern car bodies (see Section 3.1.3).

Another important application area is that of powder coatings (see Section 3.4). When epoxy resins are combined with suitable hardeners, such as dicyandiamide (DICY) (see Section 2.1.1), acid anhydrides (see Section 2.4.2), phenol novolaks (see Section 2.4.1) or polyisocyanates (see Section 2.1.1), the outcome is thermosetting powder coating systems that possess outstanding properties<sup>[8]</sup>.

One of the oldest applications is that of internal can coating<sup>[8]</sup>. Owing to their strong yellowing, these epoxy-resin-based coatings are also called “gold coatings” (see Section 3.5) and are cured with cresol resols at elevated temperatures<sup>[8]</sup>.

Epoxy resins are also successfully employed in specialty applications, such as UV-curable epoxy resin systems (see Section 3.1.2) in UV-curable solder resists and protective coatings for printed circuits, especially for fine-line and multi-layer boards<sup>[1]</sup>.

This list could be continued indefinitely, not only as regards applications for epoxy resins but also combinations with other resin types. Foremost among these are alkyds etherified with epoxies, polyacrylic resins that react with the OH groups of the epoxy resins, and amino resins, such as melamine, which are able to react with epoxy resins in different ways<sup>[8]</sup>.

## **1.2.2 Construction materials**

Applications in construction materials can also be divided into two main groups, the first of which combines epoxy resins with other materials (fibres) to make construction components. The other uses epoxy resins in electrical and electronic engineering.

The main application area for epoxy resins as matrix materials is that of composites. “Composites are always the best choice when a combination of properties is needed that one material cannot provide on its own”<sup>[1]</sup>. Fibre-reinforced epoxy resins are composites which are combined, e.g. with glass-fibre reinforcements, to produce aircraft parts and blades for wind turbines<sup>[1]</sup>, i.e. epoxy resin composites have established themselves particularly in lightweight engineering applications.

Epoxy resins are also combined with other materials like graphite, boron or Kevlar fibres<sup>[18]</sup> to generate materials that have high-precision property profiles.

Wide-ranging applications for epoxy resins are to be found in electrical and electronic engineering.

In electronics, they serve as conformal coatings or laminating resins for the base material of printed circuit boards<sup>[1]</sup>.

The printed circuit boards found in almost every electrical device consist of fibre-reinforced epoxy resins coated with copper. The epoxy resins are cured with dicyclohexylamine (DICY), amines or imidazoles<sup>[18]</sup>.

In general, applications in electrical and electronic engineering are dominated by curing with anhydrides<sup>[1]</sup> because this kind of application benefits particularly from the low viscosity, long pot-life and low exotherm<sup>[1]</sup>.

Electrical engineering has been using epoxy resins for 60 years, i.e. just after industry found applications for them. Most uses are in transformers and insulators<sup>[1]</sup>. An excellent overview of this topic is provided by *Möckel* and *Fuhrmann* in their book “Epoxidharze”<sup>[1]</sup>.

### 1.2.3 Adhesives

A strong bond between two identical or different materials, such as metals, glass, ceramics, wood, fibres and many plastics, can be obtained with adhesives based on epoxy resins<sup>[18]</sup>. The various applications, raw materials and processes are presented in detail in Section II-2 of “Formulating Adhesives and Sealants” by *Müller* and *Rath*.

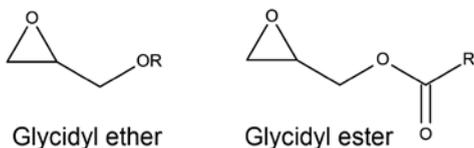
## 1.3 Terms and markets

### 1.3.1 Nomenclature

The nomenclature of epoxy resins is confusing, because different designations and colloquial terms are used in parallel.

Epoxides contain epoxy groups, i.e. three-membered rings with an ether function (see Section 2.1). The International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC) and Chemical Abstracts (CA) call these oxiranes<sup>[23]</sup>. However, this systematic designation has not become widely established, especially in the coatings industry, which continues to favour the terms epoxy resins and epoxides.

Epoxides found in industry are mainly produced from epichlorohydrin, giving rise to a methyloxirane group, known as the glycidyl group. Glycidyl ethers or esters are the most commonly employed compounds thereof<sup>[23]</sup>.



Equation 1.4: Typical oxirane compounds found in epoxy resins

ISO 7142 defines an epoxy resin as a “synthetic resin containing epoxy groups generally prepared from epichlorhydrin and a bisphenol” while DIN 16945, with regard to reactivity, states that “epoxy resins are reaction resins containing sufficient epoxide groups for curing”.

The most accurate definition is given in<sup>[8]</sup>, which makes reference to DIN 7728: “epoxy resins are oligomeric compounds containing more than one epoxide group per molecule”. These examples alone give some indication of the variation in definitions and nomenclatures employed.

The classification given in ISO 3673-1, which places epoxy resins into classes, is covered in Section 3.1. Finally, some resins that do not contain any epoxy groups are also called epoxides. These resins are polyether polyols, which are mainly synthesised from epichlorohydrin and BPA and which have no detectable epoxy groups in the molecule but are produced from epoxy groups<sup>[8]</sup>. This class of resins is known as phenoxy resins (see Section 2.4.1) and will be referred to as such in this book.

### 1.3.2 Markets

The growth of coatings production in Germany in the last five years is shown in Figure 1.1.

The impact of the 2008/2009 global economic crisis on coatings production volume is clearly visible, but so also is the fast recovery in the following years.

In contrast, the crisis had no visible effect on production volumes of epoxy resins for the adhesives market and for coatings (Figure 1.2). Only production of water-borne coatings (Figure 1.3) declined after 2007.

The epoxy resins market may therefore be considered stable. This stands in contrast to the German coatings market as a whole, which has declined since the turn of the millennium. Expressed differently, the coatings market needs economic growth of 2 % in order for it to grow, because the coatings market has been rising more slowly than gross domestic product (GDP) since 2000<sup>[28]</sup>.

This is a German phenomenon, because the global coatings market is growing at the same rate as global GDP and so is a growth market.

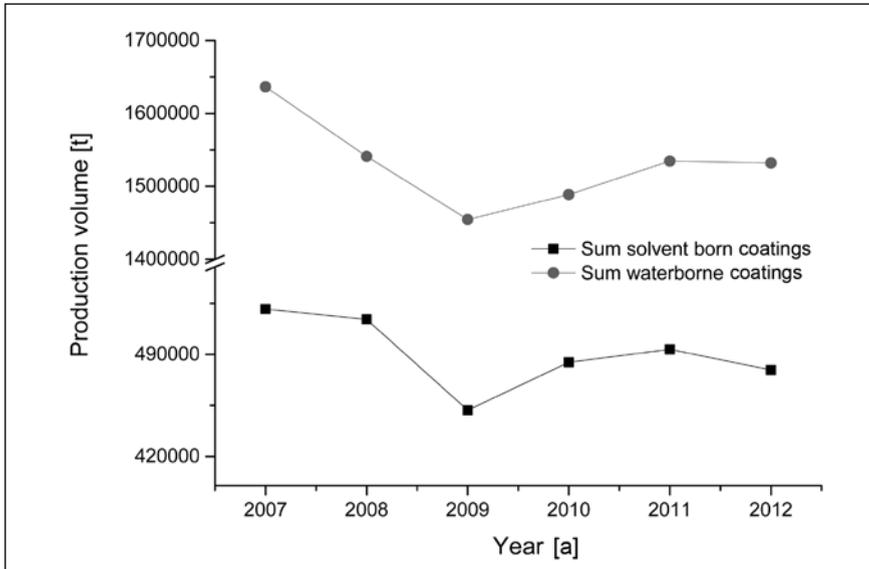


Figure 1.1: Production volumes for waterborne and solvent-borne coatings in Germany<sup>[25-27]</sup>

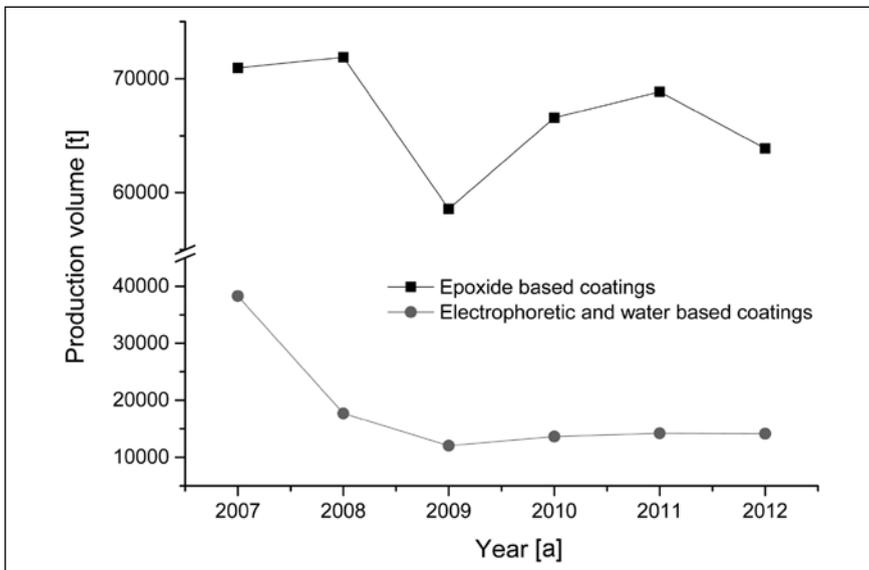


Figure 1.2: Production volumes for epoxy resins in Germany<sup>[25-27]</sup>. No data are available for the year 2010.

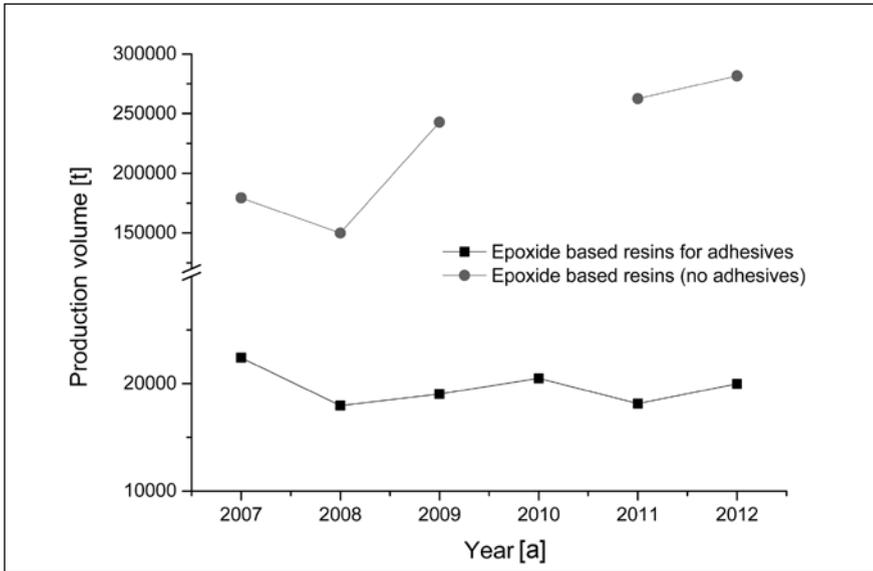


Figure 1.3: Production volumes for epoxy-based coatings and electrophoretic and waterborne coatings in Germany<sup>[25-27]</sup>

The global epoxy resins market was forecast to increase to 1.93 million metric tons by 2015, according to a 2010 study by Global Industry Analysts Inc. (European Coatings journal, 10-2010).

This growth is being driven by such market segments as “electrical laminates” and “decorative powder coatings”. The Asia-Pacific region is the largest growth market in the world, although some plants in this region were shut down during the 2008/2009 global economic crisis.

# Index

## Symbols

(R,S)-1,1-bis(4-hydroxyphenyl)-3,3,5-trimethylcyclohexane 223  
1,1,2,2-tetrakis[4-(2,3-epoxypropoxy)phenyl]-ethane 43  
1,2-diol 26  
<sup>13</sup>C-NMR 35, 56, 83  
1-chloro-2,3-epoxy propane 38  
<sup>1</sup>H-NMR 35, 56, 83  
<sup>1</sup>H-NMR spectroscopy 61  
1pack baked coating 124  
1pack-epoxy coating, waterbased 219  
1pack-epoxy resin technology, corrosion protection 220  
2,2,4,4-tetramethyl-  
1,3-cyclobutanediol 224  
2,2-bis[4-(2,3-epoxypropoxy)phenyl]propane 43  
2,4,6-tris-(N,N-dimethylaminomethyl)phenol 69  
2-hydroxyethyl methacrylate 108  
2pack epoxy binder system, second generation 139  
2pack epoxy binder, development 218  
2pack epoxy coating material, PAA hardener 218  
2pack epoxy coating, UV-stable 219  
2pack epoxy coating, zero VOC 219  
2pack epoxy coatings, improving corrosion protection 220  
2pack epoxy paint, water-dilutable 138  
2pack epoxy primer coating 133  
2pack epoxy system, UV degradation 219  
2-part can 198  
2-part can, coating 198  
2-phenyl-1,3-propanediol 225  
3,4-epoxycyclohexylmethyl-3',4'-epoxycyclohexane carboxylate 107  
3-aminopropyl triethoxysilane 95

3-part can 198  
3-part can, coating 198  
4-hydroxybutyl acrylate 92  
 $\alpha$ ,  $\alpha$ -dimethylbenzylpyridinium hexafluoroantimonate 71  
 $\alpha$ -cleavage 35  
 $\beta$ -hydroxy ether 26  
 $\beta$ -hydroxy thiol 28  
 $\beta$ -hydroxy ester 30  
 $\beta$ -hydroxy sulphonate 28  
 $\beta$ -hydroxysulphide 87

## A

AAC1 mechanism 47  
abrasion resistance 181  
acetoacetate ester 29  
acid content 85  
acid catalysis 29  
acrylic powder coating 195  
acylium ion 47  
adhesion 176  
adhesion test 161  
adhesive 15  
adhesive bond strength 178  
adhesive bonding 126  
advancement process 51–53  
adverse condition 175  
alcohol 26, 27, 31, 83  
alkalinity 35  
allyl chloride 38  
amidoamine 80  
amine 22, 28, 71, 72, 74  
amine curing agent 173  
amine number 72  
amine side reaction 179  
amine, hardener 74, 75  
amine-epoxy network 82  
aminoethylaminopropyl trimethoxysilane 94

amino-imino-dicyandiamide 24  
anhydride 84  
anhydride content 85  
anhydride curing 84  
anhydride curing (crosslinking) agent 86  
anodic dip-coating 110  
anthropogenic carbon dioxide 226  
anti-corrosion pigment 126  
anti-corrosive coating 123  
anti-corrosive coating, guideline 167  
anti-corrosive coating, standards 167  
anti-corrosive pigment, nanoscale 221  
applicator (installer) 175  
applied flooring technology 171  
architect 174  
aromatic amine 74  
aryl diazonium salt 106  
ATR method 34  
autophoretic dip-coatings 117

## B

back in service time 179  
baked varnish 122  
Bartlett 45  
BF<sub>3</sub>-methylethylamine complex 70  
binder for powder coating 163  
biodiesel 38  
bisphenol 39  
bisphenol A 39, 200  
bisphenol A diglycidyl ether 43  
bisphenol F 39  
bisphenol S 223  
bisphenol Z 39  
blister formation 178  
boron trifluoride (BF<sub>3</sub>) 70  
BPA 224  
BPA replacement through  
  bisphenol F/C 223  
BPA, replacement 223  
BPA-epoxy resin 187  
Brönsted 36  
B-stage 173  
Buddrus 36  
butterfly mechanism 45

## C

can coating 66, 197  
car park deck floor 184  
carbamate formation 80  
carbamation resistance 179  
carbenium ion 29  
carbohydrate 40  
carbon dioxide (dissolved) 179  
carbon footprint 226  
carboxylic acid 30  
castor oil fatty acid 94  
catalytic curing 69  
cathodic dip-coating 113  
cationic polymerisation 108  
chemical conversion 172  
chemical engineering 173  
chemical resistance 122, 160, 181,  
  185, 186  
chlorine, easily-saponifiable 64  
chlorine, total-content 64  
chloromethyl oxirane 38  
clean room 185  
coating manufacturer 176  
coating, flexibility 135  
coating, pasteurisable 198  
coating, sterilisable 198  
coil coating 201  
coil coating industry 201  
colour change 199  
commercial flooring 182  
compressive strength 180  
concrete 171  
concrete exposure mechanism 171  
concrete pour 171  
conductivity 180  
construction material 14  
corrosion protection 125, 126, 136,  
  139, 185  
corrosion protection system, environmen-  
  tally friendly 133  
corrosion protection, guideline 144  
corrosion protection, standardized 145  
corrosion testing 160  
corrosive stress 148

corrosivity category 142, 144, 189  
cresol novolak 58  
crude glycerol 38  
curing time 138  
cyclic phosphonic acid diester 31  
cycloaddition 28  
cycloaliphatic epoxide 46  
cyclobutane 21  
cyclopropane 21

## D

deflection temperature 181  
delamination 178  
Denigès reagent 65  
detection reaction 65  
dew point 177  
DGEBA 43  
dialkylphenylacyl sulphonium salt 106  
diamino dicyandiamide 25  
diaryl iodonium salt 106  
dichlorohydrin 38  
dicyandiamide 24, 25, 82, 187  
Diels-Alder reaction 79  
diethylenetriamine 74  
di-hydroxyethyl diethylenetriamine 78  
DIN 16945 60, 61, 85  
DIN 55633 163  
DIN 55634 161  
DIN EN 13130-1:2004 201  
DIN EN 15137:2006 201  
DIN EN ISO 12944 146  
DIN EN ISO 9702:1998 72  
DIN 16945:1989 59, 72  
diphenolic acid 39  
disulphide bridge 87  
downtime 174  
DSTV 170  
duplex coating 148

## E

easy-cure-system 139  
edge coverage 186  
EEW 60, 61, 63  
electro static discharge (ESD) 181

electronics industry 185  
elongation 180  
emission compliance 181  
emission reduction 182  
emulsifier 89, 200  
emulsion hardener 138  
endocrinal effect 223  
end-user 174  
EP dispersion 139  
EP liquid resin emulsion 138  
epichlorohydrin 38, 56  
epoxidation 45  
epoxide band 35  
epoxide resin, waterborne 89  
epoxy binder system, third generation 139  
epoxy coating material, solvent-free 135  
epoxy coating system, high-solid 136  
epoxy coatings, adhesion 143  
epoxy coatings, corrosion protection 143  
epoxy coatings, properties 143  
epoxy coatings, wet adhesion 143  
epoxy ester 94  
epoxy ester, baked finish 122  
epoxy ester, combined with fatty acids 122  
epoxy group 34  
epoxy hardener 135, 138  
epoxy hardener, properties 135  
epoxy novolaks 56  
epoxy powder coating 190  
epoxy powder coating, DICY-cured 189  
epoxy powder coating, glossy 189  
epoxy powder coatings, anhydrides curing 190  
epoxy resin, combined with amino resin 123  
epoxy resin, combined with PUR 123  
epoxy resin, hardening with isocyanate 123  
epoxy resin, liquid 134, 136, 173  
epoxy system, application 136  
epoxy system, solvent-free 136  
epoxy, curing agent 185  
epoxy-amine adduct 78, 82, 91  
epoxy-amine coating system 89

- epoxy-amine network 82  
epoxy-based powder coating, trends 222  
epoxy-phenol resin 199  
epoxy-phenol-formaldehyde emulsion 200  
ESD flooring 184  
ethylenediamine 74  
EU regulation 1282/2011 200  
European Union Risk Assessment Report 201
- F**
- Federal Society for Corrosion Protection 169  
fibre-reinforced composite 226  
finish coat 182  
flexibility resistance 186  
flooring application 173  
flooring installation 177  
Food and Drug Administration 200  
food can 197  
formaldehyde coupling 39  
fracture mechanic 180  
free acid 85  
free-radical polymerisation 200  
fusion process 51, 52
- G**
- gelation point 172  
general industrial flooring 183  
glass transition temperature 74, 143, 172  
glycerol diglycidyl ether 47  
glycidyl ester 47, 48  
glycidyl ether 47, 49  
glycidyl methacrylate 92  
graft polymer 92  
guide formulation 189, 194, 196
- H**
- halohydrin 30  
handling properties 175  
hardener 135  
hardener technology 138  
HBr 30  
heavy corrosion protection 136  
heavy duty corrosion protection 141, 143  
H-equivalent mass 71  
hexafluorophosphate 106  
hexafluorophosphoric acid 71  
hexahydrophthalic diglycidyl ester 47  
hexan-1,6-diol diglycidyl ether 47  
high speed hardener 135  
high-solid 2pack epoxy system, water-dilutable 142  
high-solids 218  
homopolymerisation 69, 70  
humidity resistance 143  
hybrid 92  
hybrid powder coating 191  
hydrogen sulphide 28  
hydrogenated bisphenol A diglycidyl ether 43  
hydrostatic pressure or head 178  
hydroxymethylfurfural 40
- I**
- imidazole 74  
imidazoline 80  
impact resistance 186  
indoor air quality 181  
indoor application 185  
industrial coating system 119  
industrial flooring application 171  
industrial primer 182  
infrared spectroscopy 34, 54  
inorganic chlorine 64  
institutional flooring 182  
intermediate coating 126  
intermediate layer 126  
IR spectroscopy 34  
ISO 12944 145  
ISO 12944:DIN EN ISO 12944-1 146  
ISO 12944:DIN EN ISO 12944-2 148  
ISO 12944:DIN EN ISO 12944-5 148  
ISO 12944:DIN EN ISO 12944-6 160  
ISO 20340 163  
ISO 21627 64  
ISO 21627:2010 63

ISO 21627-3:2010 64  
ISO 3001:1999 60, 62  
ISO 3673-1:1999 101  
ISO 4597-1:2010-01 101  
ISO 4895:1999 65  
ISO 7327:1997 85  
isocyanate 28, 67  
isosorbide 224

## K

ketimine 78, 94, 115  
ketimine formation 79

## L

lateral barrier effect 143  
legal requirement 217  
levelling property 186  
levulinic acid 39  
Lewis acid 70  
Lewis base 69  
LiAlH<sub>4</sub> 63  
light stability 150  
lignin 40  
linoleic acid 79  
load bearing property 180  
low-emission product 218  
low-molecular epoxy resin 199

## M

maintenance 148  
malonic ester derivative 29  
Mannich base 80  
Mannich base hardener 80  
markets 16  
mass spectroscopy 35  
mechanical resistance 180  
melamine 66  
melamine formaldehyde resin 66  
Menshutkin reaction 23  
migration 178  
minimum film formation temperature  
(MFT) 218, 219  
mixing ratio, epoxy to amino resin 123

moisture 177  
monolithic 180  
mutagenic effect 194

## N

N,N-dimethylbenzylamine 69  
neutral salt spray 160  
NIR spectroscopy 34, 54, 83  
NMR spectroscopy 34  
nomenclature 15  
non-ionic emulsifier 200  
non-volatile component 141  
novolak 58, 190  
novolak-glycidyl ester 201  
nucleophiles 22

## O

offshore wind turbine, corrosion  
protection 221  
OH value 63  
osmotic cell 178  
oxazolidone 28  
oxetane 21  
oxirane 21, 34  
oxonium ion 29, 70  
oxophosphetane 53

## P

PAA adduct hardener 135  
PAA hardener, properties 138  
paint for corrosion protection 150  
performance attribute 176  
performance testing standard 176  
personal protective equipment (PPE) 175  
phenacyl-benzoyl pyridinium salt 107  
phenol 26, 31  
phenol novolak 58  
phenol resin 56  
phenol-formaldehyde resin 66  
phenoxy resin 66, 125  
phenyl glycidyl ether 27  
phosphate 30  
phosphine 23

phosphinic acid 31  
phosphonic acid 31  
phosphonium compound 53  
phosphoric acid 30  
phosphoric acid ester 30  
photochemical curing 101  
plasticiser 47  
polyamide 79  
polyamidoamine 135  
polyamine 74, 79  
polyamine hardener 139  
polyamine epoxy adduct 74  
polyaminoamide, protonated 89  
polyether polyolamine 78  
polypropylene glycol diglycidyl ether 47  
polysulphide 87  
polyurethane 67  
potlife 135, 138  
powder clear-coating 192  
powder coating 185  
powder coating material 163  
powder coating system, example 164  
powder coating technology of MDF 192  
pre-adduct hardener 135  
pre-grinding process 188  
Prilezhaev 11  
Prilezhaev reaction 45  
primary amine 72  
product development 218  
propene 38  
protective paint system, durability 147  
proton affinity 35

## Q

quaternary ammonium salt 23

## R

REACH process 201  
reactive diluent 47, 173  
receiving coat 182  
reduction of emission 218  
refurbishment of existing floor 183

registration, evaluation, authorization and restriction of chemicals (REACH regulation) 217  
requirement for protective paint systems 165  
residual cure 173  
ring strain 34  
ring vibration 35

## S

salt crystal 179  
Schlack 12  
scratch resistance 181  
secondary amine 73  
secondary containment flooring 184  
self-emulsifying resin 89  
self-levelling floor 183  
semi volatile organic compounds (SVOC) 217  
sensitising effect 74  
Shell 65  
Shell process 51  
shrinkage 143  
silicone 95  
S<sub>N</sub>1 mechanism 29  
S<sub>N</sub>2 reaction 22, 29  
Solvay 38  
solvent-free system 218  
stability to lactic acid 199  
static electricity 185  
sterilisation test 199  
storage stability 186  
sulphite 28  
surface appearance 179  
surface hardness 186  
surface-tolerant coating 144

## T

Taffy process 51, 53  
tautomer 24  
temperature resistance 181  
tertiary amine 73  
test procedure 159  
test, stress criteria 159

tetrafluoroborate 106  
thermoplastic 66  
thermoset powder coating 185  
thermosetting powder coating 191  
thioether network 87  
Thiol 28  
TL/TP-KOR 128  
total amine content 72  
toxicology 200  
triaryl sulphonium salt 106  
trifluoromethanesulphonic acid 71  
triglycidylisocyanurate 185  
triphenyl phosphine 54  
TTT diagram 172  
types of can 197

## U

ultra-low baking 191  
UV resistance 181

## V

value chain of industrial flooring 174  
versatic acid glycidyl ester 47  
vitrification. *see* B-stage 172

VOC guideline 134  
volatile organic compounds (VOC) 217  
volatile organic content 175

## W

walk-on time 179  
water 26, 31  
water condensation 160  
water condensation, sulphur dioxide 160  
water immersion 160  
water spotting 179  
water vapour 178  
water vapour transmission 178  
waterbased epoxy 182  
waterproofing membrane 178  
wear resistance 181  
weathering and light stability 185  
wet adhesion 143  
wettability 150  
Wittig reaction 53

## Z

zinc dust primer 150

# Dornbusch + Christ + Rasing

## EPOXY RESINS

**The Mission:** To acquire a solid knowledge and understanding of epoxy resins – from their historical development to how their properties are determined by their chemical structure, through to the special attributes underpinning their use as binders in various application areas. This affords a way of gaining a current overview of this important class of raw materials. Essential for any formulator of competitive modern paint systems.

**The Audience:** Newcomers, career-changers, students and professionals wanting to broaden and deepen their knowledge and who seek key background information to assist them with the selection and use of modern epoxy resins. For those wanting not only to consider the specifics of the underlying chemistry, but also to learn about the practical uses of epoxies.

**The Value:** This book serves on one hand as a reference on the chemistry of epoxies and their properties and on the other as a monograph on the industrial applications of epoxy resins, both with and without epoxy groups, in coatings. It presents a clear and vivid overview of the current status of epoxy use and their combinations in various paint systems.

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