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Quick Color Chemistry:

A Q&A on Pigmentation with Americhem's Research Scientist Chris Miller

Q: In case anyone is unfamiliar, what is pigment, and why is it important?

A: Pigments provide color to objects. They are finely ground particles that can reflect, absorb, or transmit light to create different colors. Americhem disperses the pigment to develop the optimal color strength. This allows the customer to get the maximum color value out of the pigment. The pigments are encapsulated in a polymer to create a masterbatch.

Q: What are the different types of pigments we should know about?

A: There are two key categories of pigments: *organic* and *inorganic*. Both types have great value in the plastics industry. Knowing which to use in specific applications help impart the best properties needed for the final part/application.

Q: What are the differences between Organic and Inorganic pigment types?

A: Organic pigments are based on carbon rings or chains. They are usually brighter or more chromatic in color. Inorganic pigments are typically based on metal compounds or minerals. They are usually less chromatic than organic pigments and also weaker in color strength, but may be the best choice for some applications. It depends on what final properties are needed.

Q: When would you choose one type of pigment over the other?

A: Every raw material is going to behave slightly differently, but you can safely make a few generalizations about organic and inorganic pigments, and how they will perform in different applications.

Organic

- Smaller particle size
- More transparent or translucent
- Higher chroma, or brightness
- Generally less stable, particularly to sunlight and heat
- Take more energy to fully develop or disperse the color

Inorganic

- Larger particle size
- Generally more opaque, with better ability to hide a substrate or base color
- Lower chroma, or brightness
- Generally more stable, for example, to light or chemicals
- Take less energy to fully develop or disperse the color

Q: What else should we know about choosing pigments?

A: Keep in mind that one category of pigment is not inherently better than the other—they are both important and are ideal for different situations. While knowing the difference between organic and inorganic pigments is helpful, you should still always consult with color experts when choosing pigments—they know the raw materials, and can ensure you end up with the best pigment for your application.

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About Americhem

Celebrating its 75th year, Americhem is a global organization that delivers custom color and additive solutions for customers seeking superior performance and batch-to-batch consistency for their polymer products. The company specializes in color and additive masterbatches, and single pigment dispersions, all backed by complete technical support that ensures quality, reliability and value. Americhem operates 10 manufacturing plants and also maintains representative sales offices around the globe. Central Research & Development facilities and headquarters are located in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio. For more information visit Americhem.com or call 800.228.3476.

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