



CONCRETE SEALER

Expectations & Maintenance Guide

Maintenance

Periodic maintenance of your sealed surface is necessary and will extend both the life of the sealer and the concrete below it. Exterior concrete will eventually be stained by leaves, oils, grease, mildew, or other natural occurrences. Stains can become set over time if they are allowed to penetrate and eat into the surface coating. General cleanup guidelines include the following:

- **Oil and grease** – detergents or degreasers like Simple Green, or common engine degreasers
- **Rust and leaf stains** – mild acidic products like Lime Away, CLR, or specific concrete cleaners
- **Mildew** – household bleach will affect most mildew when treated in a timely manner
- **Tree sap or road tar** – spot cleaners such as Goo Gone or Dissolves-It

Occasional cleaning of your surface with a mild detergent (dish soap), a little elbow grease, and a thorough rinsing will provide the best maintenance for your concrete. Concrete, specifically sealed concrete, is a very durable surface but you have a part in making it last. The better care you take of it the longer you can expect it to provide the look and durability you expect. Consult your concrete contractor, your local decorative concrete supply house or national organizations like the American Society of Concrete Contractors (www.asconline.org) to ensure proper products and experienced contractors are utilized.



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To protect your new decorative concrete surface, a sealer has been applied that will add durability and enhance the colors. The sealer used was a (solvent/water) based acrylic that will need occasional cleaning and periodic re-application to provide an enduring lifespan by decreasing water penetration, as well as improving stain and UV resistance. The following information is meant to be a guide to understanding your concrete surface sealer and knowing how to properly maintain it. Concrete is meant to be a long-term element of your home or building site, and your understanding and participation are essential.

Aesthetics

The colors of your surface may come from pigments in the concrete or dyes and stains applied after the concrete was placed, but having a quality sealer applied and maintained will ultimately determine the intensity of the color. Light reflecting off any surface determines the color intensity and brightness, so sealer plays a critical role. As sealer wears, the light is more scattered and the color sheen is less intense. Sealer applied even to a surface that has been left unsealed for years will bring the color back to life, giving a nearly new appearance.

Similar to the paint on your walls, sealers come in various gloss levels, from flat (matte) to high gloss that gives a wet look. Higher gloss levels contain slightly more resin and are thicker in their formulation, but their long-term performance is about the same as lower gloss sealers. Matte-finish sealers will enhance color when applied to concrete, but high gloss sealers will increase the intensity of the color sheen. The gloss level chosen for your project should come from a combination of your contractor's experience and recommendation, and how well it fits your desired finished project appearance.

Decorative concrete sealers will protect and add to the lifespan of your concrete by acting as a sacrificial coat to the concrete. Environmental conditions are the worst offenders for causing damage to concrete and a concrete sealer can be used to slow deterioration caused by inclement weather.



Sealers are “scratch and stain resistant”, not “scratch and stain proof”. As a sacrificial coat it should be expected that over time it will show wear, and eventually need reapplication. The timing of this reapplication will vary tremendously based on the conditions the concrete is exposed to (interior or exterior), location (interior floor, sidewalks, or driveway), and general traffic. A general rule of thumb is higher traffic and UV exposed areas should receive new sealer every two to three years, while lighter traffic and interior areas could last four to five years. Faded areas, patchiness, and multiple color shades, especially when the surface is wet, are all signs of a surface needing new sealer.

Application

In all sealer applications, manufacturer's directions should be followed when installing the sealer. Sealer can be applied by sprayer, roller, or broom, but it is imperative to **remember that sealer is meant to be applied in thin coats**. Over-application can cause numerous problems including bubbling, sealer cracking, and whitening. Coverage rates listed on the product labeling are the best guideline to the application rate.

At an ambient temperature of 70° sealer will typically be dry to the touch in 1-2 hours, and accept light foot traffic in 3-4 hours. It is recommended not to place furniture or park a car on a freshly sealed surface for a full 24 hours or more. Do not seal a surface when rain or condensation is expected within 12 hours of the coating being placed.

Prior to any resealing the area should be systematically cleaned with a walk behind scrubber, power wash, or thorough hand scrubbing. Any detergents used in the cleaning process need to be carefully rinsed off and the surface should be completely dry before sealer application. Resealing is best performed by a qualified contractor who is trained and experienced in proper preparation, sealer selection, and application techniques.



Safety

Slip resistance must be addressed during the initial application of sealer and in all subsequent reseals. Numerous additives are available to mix into the sealer prior to its application that give the surface a “grittiness” and help reduce slip and fall occurrences. The location and use of the concrete are factors in determining how much anti-skid material should be added to the sealer. Interior floors that are likely to have little or no wet shoe traffic will require little or no anti-skid material, while exterior public walkways should always include sufficient material to a point that it can definitely be felt with a bare hand. Be sure the anti-skid material is made specifically for your sealer type and is purchased from a concrete or decorative concrete supply house. Adding sand and/or silica materials is not recommended and can actually cause sealer deterioration.

The application of sealer creates safety issues. Solvent based sealers have a strong odor, are flammable, and should not be applied in any occupied dwelling, especially around an open flame (water heater pilot light, gas logs). If they are applied in a confined space a respirator is mandatory and the area must have adequate ventilation. Water-based sealers typically have a smell similar to a latex paint or glue, and in the case of both sealer types the installer's skin should be protected.