

COLORED MORTAR CLEANING INSTRUCTIONS

Understanding Cleaning.

Cleaning procedures can alter the appearance of a mortar joint, changing both texture and color. Most cleaning techniques are designed to remove mortar droppings or smears from the surface of newly-constructed masonry. However, if these techniques dissolve the cement paste from the surface of a mortar joint, the appearance of that joint is no longer dominated by the color of the hardened cement paste, but reflects the appearance of sand particles that are exposed on the surface. In addition, improper cleaning may damage masonry units and compromise the ability of the masonry to resist water penetration. So extreme caution must be observed when cleaning mortar.

First, Minimize Cleaning Requirements.

When it comes to cleaning masonry, less is better. Careful workmanship includes using skills that minimize mortar droppings and smears on the face of the masonry-- right from the start. The mason contractor can use straw, sand, or plastic to protect the base of the wall from rain-splashed mud and mortar splatter. The mason should also assure that the inside scaffold board is turned on edge at the end of each working day to prevent rain from splashing mortar and dirt onto the masonry wall. Covering the tops of walls at the end of each working day will prevent rain from entering walls and help reduce the possibility of efflorescence.

Clean Masonry Carefully.

Use the least aggressive cleaning technique possible. Make certain that the cleaning procedure is consistent with the recommendations of the manufacturer of the units, and pre-qualify the procedure on the sample panel and a small test area of the building. When acid-based cleaning solutions are used, the mortar should be allowed to cure at moderate temperatures for about seven days prior to cleaning. After cleaning a trial area, allow the area to dry, and closely examine mortar joint surfaces to ascertain that the procedure has not etched the surface.

Clean from the top of the wall section to the bottom. For consistent results, do not overlap areas being cleaned, and be sure to follow the dilution and cleaning instructions from the manufacturer of the cleaning product.



CAUTION:

Contact with wet (unhardened) concrete, mortar, cement, or cement mixtures can cause SKIN IRRITATION, SEVERE CHEMICAL BURNS, or SERIOUS EYE DAMAGE. Wear waterproof gloves, a long-sleeved shirt, full-length trousers, and proper eye protection when working with these materials. If you have to stand in wet concrete, use waterproof boots that are high enough to keep concrete from flowing into them. Wash wet concrete, mortar, cement, or cement mixtures from your skin immediately after contact. Indirect contact through clothing can be as serious as direct contact, so promptly rinse out wet concrete, mortar, cement, or cement mixtures from clothing. Seek immediate medical attention if you have persistent or severe discomfort.