



# New Rules-Clay Brick

for final cleandown of newly constructed clay brick buildings

*"Dollar for dollar, nothing has more impact on the public's perception of a newly constructed masonry building than its final cleandown."*

— David W. Boyer



## Why do we need new rules?

Because long gone are the days when cleaning masonry meant red clay brick and gray mortar only. Long gone are the days of "one size fits all" post final cleandown of new masonry.

Today's masonry includes countless styles of clay brick; concrete brick; and manufactured, cast and natural stone. Trying to remove the excess mortar after construction without regard for each substrate's unique characteristics can mean disaster — color loss, etched mortar joints, wand marks and burned masonry.

The good news is that by following a few simple guidelines, you can bring home great results every time on any masonry surface — brick, block, manufactured stone — or any combination of these and other masonry units.

Some of those guidelines like "always test" are timeless. Others, like "clean early," have been around but are increasingly important. Still others, such as "know your surface", are new rules for masons brought up in the traditions of "masonry equals brick or block" and one size fits all for cleaning them.

## 1. Know your surface.

Clay brick comes in a wide variety of colors and textures. Many get their effects from components not found in simple red clay brick. A cleaner used successfully on one type of brick may react with another, causing stains. Many white or light colored brick, for example, contain vanadium salts. They'll react with some cleaners to cause ugly green, gray, brown, even purple vanadium stains. As soon as you get the job, get on site and find out exactly what kind of brick you'll be cleaning. In many cases, brick producers include cleaning recommendations on pallet tags.

## 2. Use the right Sure Klean® cleaner.

Once you've identified the type of masonry you'll be cleaning, you can choose a cleaner made specifically for that substrate. Results may be unpredictable if you use anything else. For most red brick, Sure Klean® 600 Detergent is the right choice. Sure Klean Vana Trol® is made for brown, white or light-colored brick. NEVER USE RAW ACID.

## 3. Always test.

Even if you think you know the surface, and you have the right cleaner — test the cleaner on a small, out-of-the-way section of the wall. Testing will help you determine the most efficient dwell times and dilution rates. More importantly, you'll avoid costly unpleasant surprises.

## 4. Use the mildest dilution that gives effective results.

The higher the dilution with fresh water, the safer your masonry will be. It's really important on clay brick walls that have concrete or natural stone trim. How do you know what the effective dilution rate is? See rule #3. Limestone and manufactured stone components on brick walls should always be protected from the cleaner, no matter how dilute.

## 5. Clean early.

Don't let mortar cure too long — particularly high-strength mortars. The longer it cures, the harder and more problematic it is to remove. For Type N mortar on clay brick, the cleaning window is 7-28 days. For harder type S mortar, the window shrinks to 7-21 days. As you can see, the window for high-strength mortars is significantly smaller.

## 6. Basics still apply. Follow them.

- **Use lots of water** to pre-wet the brick before applying the cleaner. If you don't pre-wet, you're more likely to cause staining and excessive erosion of the mortar joints. Some staining can be corrected — for a price. Damage the mortar joints, however, and you've reduced the weather resistance of the entire wall. Short of re-pointing, that kind of damage is irreversible. Use plenty of water to rinse the spent cleaner and dissolved soiling from the surface. 6 - 8 gallons per minute is ideal.
- **400-1,000 psi is the safest**, effective pressure for rinsing dissolved soiling and spent cleaner from the cleaned brick. Higher psi risks wand marks and eroded mortar joints.
- **Follow all safety information** on the product label. It's there to protect YOU!
- **Never go it alone.** Questions or problems? Call your distributor, masonry cleaner manufacturer, or the manufacturer's local field rep. Your success is their success.

## 7. Protect what you clean.

When the cleaned masonry is dry, apply a penetrating, breathable water-repellent. By keeping water out of the brick and masonry joints, you break the destructive freeze/thaw and wet/dry cycles that can crack and spall masonry walls. You'll also help prevent other water-related problems like efflorescence. For most clay brick, use Sure Klean® Weather Seal Siloxane PD (pre-diluted).

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