



New Rules - Concrete Brick

for final clean-down of newly constructed concrete brick buildings

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

— 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 construction cleaning 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." Today - more than ever before — people must understand that different building materials demand a different approach to cleaning.

1. Know your surface.

Concrete brick is available in a wide variety of colors, but generally sports a fairly smooth surface. It's essentially a smooth, colored architectural CMU. Any cleaning operation will alter its appearance and expose some of the fine aggregate cast into the face of the units. Done in a controlled way, cleaning can improve the overall color uniformity and weathering resistance of the finished wall. Because concrete brick is acid-soluble, if you clean it like clay brick, you'll do irreparable damage. Be careful! Some concrete brick closely resembles clay brick. It can be so convincing that people clean it like clay, only to discover the difference when the damage is done.

2. Use the right Sure Klean® cleaner.

The appropriate cleaner for concrete brick is Sure Klean® Concrete Brick Cleaner. Always protect concrete brick when cleaning adjacent surfaces, then clean the concrete brick separately. NEVER USE RAW ACID or cleaning formulations that contain hydrochloric acid.

3. Always test.

Even when you know the surface, and you have the right cleaner, test the cleaner on a small, out of the way section of the wall. On walls that incorporate more than one color of concrete brick, test each. Testing will help you determine the most efficient dwell times and dilution rates. More importantly, you'll avoid costly unpleasant surprises. Test using the product and equipment you plan to use for general clean-down.

4. Use the mildest dilution that gives effective results.

The higher the dilution with fresh water, the safer you'll be, particularly on concrete brick. How do you know what the effective dilution rate is? See rule #3.

5. Clean early.

Don't let mortar cure too long — particularly high-strength mortar. The longer unwanted mortar smears cure, the harder they are to remove. It's a big problem on sensitive surfaces. For concrete brick walls, the optimal time to clean is 7 - 14 days after the mortar joints are tooled.

6. Basics still apply. Follow them.

- **Use lots of water** to pre-wet the concrete brick before applying the cleaner. If you don't pre-wet, you're more likely to cause staining and excessive erosion of the concrete brick and the mortar joints. Some staining can be corrected — for a price. Damage the concrete brick and the mortar joints, however, and you've reduced the weather resistance of the entire wall. That kind of damage is irreversible. Use lots more 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 concrete brick. Higher psi risks visible wand marks in the concrete brick, 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 breathable weather-repellent. By keeping water out of the concrete brick and mortar joints, you break the destructive freeze/thaw and wet/dry cycles that can cause cracks and spalls. You'll also help prevent other water-related problems like efflorescence. For most concrete brick, use Sure Klean® Custom Masonry Sealer or Sure Klean Weather Seal Blok Guard & Graffiti Control II.

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