



New Rules-Thin Brick

for final clean-down of newly constructed thin brick veneers

"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

1. Know your surface.

Thin fired-clay units, often referred to as "thin brick," are increasingly popular as interior and exterior wall-coverings throughout residential and commercial markets. Although usually 1/2- to 1-inch thick, thin brick has face sizes similar to conventional brick. Installed, it gives the appearance of a conventional brick wall. Thin brick comes as individual units which are adhered to a substrate, and the joints filled in with mortar or grout, or as cast-in-place panels. When mortar and grout are used, new construction cleaning is needed to remove the excess, just like conventional masonry walls. Unlike conventional masonry, thin-brick walls often use a latex-modified grout or mortar that gives the joints a degree of water-repellency.

2. Use the right Sure Clean® cleaner.

Always use a cleaner specifically made for the substrate. For thin brick, use Sure Clean® Thin Brick Cleaner. Thin Brick Cleaner is proven effective at safely removing the latex-modified grouts and mortars that are resistant to many conventional masonry cleaners. 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 helps 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 thin 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 any clay masonry wall should always be protected from the cleaner, no matter how dilute.

5. Clean early.

Don't let mortar or grout cure too long. The longer it cures, the harder and more problematic it is to remove. For latex-modified mortar on clay brick, the cleaning window is 7-14 days.

6. Basics still apply. Follow them.

- Use lots of water to pre-wet thin 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. Damaged mortar joints, however, can't be fixed short of re-pointing. 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 weather-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 thin brick, use Sure Clean® Weather Seal® Siloxane PD (pre-diluted). If graffiti protection is required, use Sure Clean® Weather Seal Blok-Guard & Graffiti Control II.



Photo courtesy Bonal Bricks

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.