

Cleaning Concrete Masonry

Oberfield's Inc. **recommended** procedure for cleaning concrete masonry surfaces



NEW CONSTRUCTION

In order to reduce the amount of cleaning required at the completion of a building, walls should be cleaned each day. Mortar droppings should be allowed to harden slightly, then scraped off with a trowel or wood scraper. A small piece of broken block is also effective, followed by brushing with a stiff bristle or stainless steel wire brush (never use a steel wire brush).

Good masonry practices will minimize the amount of final cleaning significantly. Turning scaffolding boards at the end of the day and using sand or straw at the base of the wall will eliminate stains that are very difficult to remove later. Another important step is to cover the top of unfinished walls at the end of each day. This will prevent water from entering the cavities and will help prevent efflorescence. The plastic or tarps should drape at least two feet down each side of the wall.

Final cleaning will be easier if it occurs approximately one week after completion of walls (newly constructed walls must set 4 or 5 days to allow the mortar to harden prior to cleaning).

Never use high pressure cleaning! The use of high pressure power washers will most certainly alter the appearance of a concrete masonry wall and could cause un-repairable damage to the building. A pressure washer with a maximum of 200 psi and a wide flare nozzle held 12 to 18 inches from the surface will give excellent results on most projects. Pre-wetting walls is a necessary first step. Work in sections from top down for best results.

CHEMICAL CLEANING

If good masonry practices are followed, chemical cleaning will seldom be necessary. If required, Oberfield's Inc. suggests the following:

Due to the various types of Architectural Concrete Masonry products available, please consult Oberfield's Inc. technical sales department for a recommended cleaner to best suit your application.

Always follow chemical manufacturer's recommendations for application process.

Follow mix solutions and directions of manufacturer. Always pre-wet surfaces prior to application of any cleaning solution.

Oil stains, grease, graffiti or efflorescence removal, refer to N.C.M.A. Tek Notes 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, and 8.4. Copies of these teks are available from Oberfield's Inc., www.oberfields.com, or The National Concrete Masonry Association.