

To Coat or Not To Coat?

○ text by TRACEY HOLWITZ, OWNER, SUPER-KRETE INTERNATIONAL

CONCRETE HAS BECOME A FASCINATING CANVAS FOR CONTRACTORS EVERYWHERE. IN A TIME WHERE PENNY-PINCHING IS THE NORM, HOMEOWNERS ARE SPENDING fewer dollars on new projects and more dollars on remodeling and restoring what they have. As a manufacturer of concrete resurfacing and overlay products, Super-Krete trains contractors at all ability levels on how to make a profit, stay in business, and generate a very satisfied customer referral base in an economic downturn. We achieve this by teaching solutions.

When Mr. and Mrs. Jones want to upgrade their garage floor to something other than concrete, they typically desire a chemical-resistant, decorative coating that is simple to install and easy to maintain. They head down to the local building materials store and see what concrete paint they can find. They pick the color they want and head home to put it down and see how the color comes out.

What they don't know will likely hurt them in the long run. Concrete coatings should not be seen as a permanent fix-all to the Jones' family investment. Anyone who plans to keep their property for many years to come will likely want a solution that is decorative and durable. In many cases, concrete coatings get a bad name when installed by anyone other than the trained professional because they delaminate, blister, and eventually fail.

You may have heard the sayings "Slick to slick won't stick!" or "Unless it's all gone, you'll break the bond!" These sayings are very true and should be understood by the coatings installer. Issues of coating delamination and moisture vapor transmission are vastly gaining awareness now that faulty products have been on the market long enough to show their true colors.

I am not suggesting that property owners install their own coatings. My point is that often property owners will take on such a project to save a penny here or there, and it is likely that the problem will be three times more expensive to correct than a professional installation at the beginning.

It is easy to look at a neighbor's slab of decorative concrete and think, "How hard can it be to do that on my driveway?" Though to a professional installer it is easy, it is likely much more difficult to do it right for the person who has never been exposed to the process. The misconception is that concrete is hard, tough,

and solid. Homeowners do not think of assessing the concrete before putting paint on it. However, several factors influence the final outcome:

Note if the surface to be coated is structurally sound. No coating will stabilize structures. Certain cracks can be repaired by using various crack treatment methods. Depending on the type of crack and the cause for the crack, a coating may not be able to restore the damaged surface, as you may need it to. Though cracks can be treated, they are never to be guaranteed to not return.

Determine if the concrete surface already has a coating on it. All existing coatings, such as paints, sealers, greases, oils, waxes or other bond inhibiting contaminants must be completely removed from the surface (including tanning lotion on a pool deck). This can be done by a variety of methods including mechanical removal such as shot blasting, water blasting, or sand blasting.

Often, it is difficult to determine if a curing compound was used in the initial pour of the concrete slab. Curing compounds typically contain chemicals and agents that may later cause coating failures, no matter what type of surface preparation was used. Suspects would include certain concrete curing compounds, chemical hardeners, bond/form release agents or admixtures to reduce or improve air entrainment or cement workability. There is no telling what the long-term effects could be if curing compound was indeed used in the initial pour.

It is important to note if efflorescence exists on the concrete surface or surrounding areas. Efflorescence is the powdery salt residue on the surface created when the water-soluble salts are carried from below by water and evaporates. Efflorescence is an indication of a definite moisture problem and the area must be treated.


Always test the pH and moisture vapor transmissions levels in the concrete. The results of these tests will indicate the structural stability and integrity of the concrete to be treated or coated. It is important to know that any substrate containing high alkalinity levels can be detrimental and should not be coated. The substrate will most likely corrode despite the durability of the coating that overlays it. Additionally, moisture levels should read at or below the levels indicated by the coating manufacturer.



decorative concrete

Determine if the concrete substrate is porous. All surfaces to be coated with overlay products must be profiled to ensure proper bonding between the overlay and the concrete substrate. Hard-troweled or steel-troweled surfaces are not porous and must be profiled. The simple way to determine if a concrete surface is porous is spray water onto the area to be coated. If the water is absorbed by the concrete, the concrete is porous. If the water beads on the surface, the surface must be profiled. A profiled surface can be achieved by several methods including high-pressure water blast, shot blasting, sandblasting, or grinding.

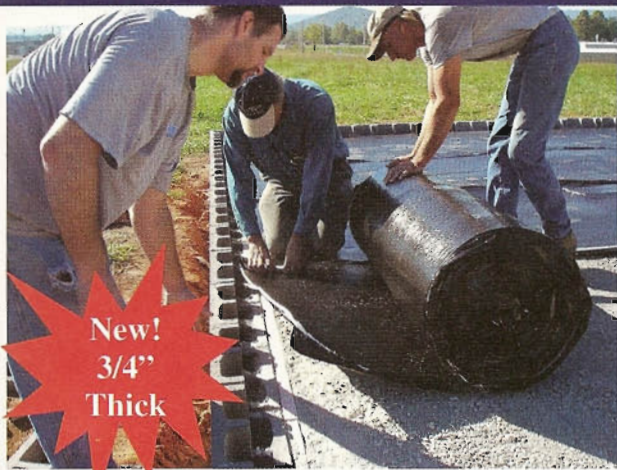
Finally, if the concrete has been thoroughly and properly evaluated and treated and is ready to receive a coating, it is imperative that a complete system be used. It is not likely that just one product will be the fix-all for the masterpiece you want to create. Any manufacturer would recommend you stick with one system—and not intermix different products—to ensure the best results and assistance in troubleshooting.

In following these simple steps, one is likely to have a decorative overlay installed for as little as \$6 per square foot and up, depending on your texture and color selections. This definitely beats the price of removing and replacing the concrete to a Plain Jane slab. Not to mention, a cleaner and environmentally friendly alternative. Before you know it, your neighbor will want one, too! 

Tracey Holwitz is the owner of Super-Krete International, Inc., in El Cajon, California. For more information, visit supertracey@super-crete.com.

BarrierXT

New Revolution in Waterproof Concrete Insulation



- 3/4" Thick 4'x60' Rolls
- 100% Moisture-Proof
- Insulates from Heat Loss
- Patented Self Taping Seams
- Backfill protection
- Protects waterproofing membrane from damage
- Radiant floors
- Snow and ice melt

Call Northwestern Ohio Foam Products to find out why **The Barrier** and **BarrierXT** are the best solutions for waterproofing membrane protection.

NOFP
High Performance Insulation
800-339-4850

WWW.THEBARRIER.COM

plumwall

Design. Build. Exceed.

ICF BRACING SYSTEMS

BRACE YOURSELF

A new kind of strength has arrived...

• PLUMWALL LTD. • 905-706-7586 • www.plumwall.com •

Vertical Stamping

Taking Decorative Concrete To A New Level



Incredible Bonding Ability!
Strong and Durable! Lightweight!
Easy to Install!

"Installers & Distributors Wanted"
FLEX-C-MENT

Monthly Hands on Training!

Visit our website at:
www.flex-c-ment.com
Ph. 888-515-2132