

## Proper Cleaning and Maintenance of Decorative Concrete Surfaces

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By Lindy Ausburne

*For over 30 years Lindy has built a solid reputation in the world of concrete by combining industry knowledge with hands-on field experience. In*

*her opinion, these are the key components in assuring those who have a vested interest receive true and lasting value in regards to classic beauty, attention to detail, and premium performance.*

*It is her personal belief that an honest and reliable reputation is the recipe for success, and throughout her career she has worked hard at increasing the demand and overall image of the hardscapes industry.*

*Lindy now runs High Definition Concrete consulting and is actively involved in a number of forums aimed at the improvement of the decorative concrete industry.*

Your decorative concrete surface has been sealed. It is **stain resistant** ... it is not **stain proof**. Stains can become set over time if you do not clean spills of foreign matter as soon as possible.

Interior surfaces which do not have drains for ease in flushing with water, may be cleaned by mopping, use of carpet cleaning machine with extractor, floor scrubber with light duty pad, steam cleaner, or wet/dry vac. This will prevent damage to adjoining walls.

Exterior surfaces may be cleaned using a push broom and hose to flush clean or a pressure washer. **If a pressure washer is used for routine cleaning, recommend that you limit the psi to 1200 and you never use turbo/rotating tip.**

**Do not place rubber backed mats, or other rubber objects, on any decorative surfacing system.** Rising vapors being emitted from cementitious substrates must be allowed to evaporate naturally. Rubber backed mats trap rising vapors, preventing the natural

evaporation process, resulting in a hard mineral deposit build up which is difficult, if not impossible to remove without discoloration. Rugs which allow vapors to pass through them, or those with open weave/waffle like backing, are generally acceptable "indoors." Rubberized objects can also stick to the sealer, with it bonding to them and cause peeling up/off of them.

**Do not place potted plants directly on your surface.** Use a plant dolly, or plant stand with legs to allow for ventilation between planter and surfacing system. Failure to do so will leave a white mineral deposit which will permanently discolor the surface. Plant fertilizers also have potential to cause discoloration.

**All cleaning solutions must be rinsed thoroughly.** Special care must be taken to **properly meter** all concentrated cleaning solutions, **especially those which have an orange citrus base.** Janitorial supply houses promote orange citrus cleaners as "all natural, non-toxic, environmentally safe;" however, they are non the less **a natural form of acid** and have the potential to pit, eat away, or permanently discolor your surfaces' protective coat of sealer. **All cleaning solutions must be properly diluted** (in the case of concentrated orange citrus, at a rate of 20 parts warm water to 1 part concentrate). After use of all cleaning solutions your surface must be rinsed thoroughly to remove all cleaning material films and residues.

***Do not use ammonia based cleaners on your decorative surfaces*** (such as Pine-Sol) or any cleaner having an abrasive nature. For routine cleaning/maintenance you may use any biodegradable/water soluble cleaner that is ammonia and citrus acid free. Rinse/flush completely with clean/fresh water after use.

Epoxy surfaces should be cleaned only with warm water for the first week.

Tree sap, and other like residues, can be spot cleaned using Goo-Gone or Dissolves-It on an absorbent cloth. Carburetor cleaner works well for spot removal of road tar and black tire marks. Rinse/flush completely with clean/fresh water after use.

***Never use MEK, Acetone, Xylene, Xylo, Paint Thinner, or any type of solvent based chemical to remove foreign matter.***

***Special care must be taken to rinse away pool or spa treatment chemicals which are in concentrated form as soon as possible to deter surface damage/discoloration.*** Note: treated pool and spa water itself will not harm your decorative surface so long as it has been diluted at proper ratios.

Mineral and lime deposits, as well as efflorescence, may be cleaned using a solution of one pound (1 lb) TSP (Tri-Sodium Phosphate) per 1 gallon of warm water. Scrub with push broom or brush, allow to set for approximately 15 minutes, then rinse/flush thoroughly. Spot cleaning with Lime Away (or other like product) is also acceptable; again rising thoroughly. Note: these methods will only provide results if the mineral, lime, or efflorescence has not actually eaten into the sealer.

Routine cleaning should be performed using non-film forming neutral balanced cleaners (they don't require rinsing), will not leave streaks, are green/environmentally safe, and will not harm your surface.

***Standard good housekeeping***, preventing the build up of grease, oil, soap residues, suntan lotions, etc. are your responsibility. ***Failure to do so can result in slip/fall accidental injuries since foot or shoe sole is not in direct contact with decorative surface.***

***All decorative surfaces must be sealed to deter/ prevent entrapment of foreign matter.*** A sacrificial coat of wax, type and application method depending on the end use of the surface, may be applied over interior surfaces to deter scuffing from shoe soles or rubber tipped fixtures (furniture, appliances, exercise equipment, etc.) as well as to prolong life of the sealer. ***Never apply wax on exterior surfaces.***

***The use of any deicing compound containing ammonium nitrate and/or ammonium sulfate within a winter maintenance program is strictly prohibited.*** These chemical deicers rapidly attack and disintegrate many types of sealers and decorative surfacing systems. Those containing magnesium chloride can also cause moderate damage.

***Hard water deposits have the potential to discolor decorative concrete surfaces if remaining wet for extended periods of time;*** therefore, the heads of landscape sprinkler systems should be set to deter excessive watering of decks, driveways, sidewalks, etc. Lay of the land should be graded to promote run off of water (rain or other sources) away from decorative concrete surfaces, with the same being true of roof drain gutters. If you have hard water recommend you consider having a water softener installed for interior

cleaning; or, for exterior cleaning purposes purchase in-line (attached to faucet or hose) water softener (cost is typically less than \$50.00 for it along with a couple of reusable/refillable cartridges).

***At some point in time it will become necessary for your surface to be resealed.*** Longevity and performance will depend on the end use of the surface, environmental conditions it is subjected to (moisture, freeze-thaw cycling, UV rays), wear patterns, and other contributing factors.

If a skid-resistant micro media was incorporated in your sealer when originally applied, traffic patterns and degree of use will bring about the wearing off of this slip/fall resistant deterrent to a certain degree over time. It is your responsibility to contact the applicator should you determine this to be the case. To address this safety concern it will be necessary that you have the surface properly cleaned, prepared, and resealed, again incorporating the skid resistant media, with the work performed by professional applicator/contractor

***Acknowledgment***

***I have been provided with this Proper Care and Maintenance information.*** I understand that my failure to abide by the recommendations and guidelines set forth will void any written or implied warranties of the applicator/independent contractor or the manufacturer as pertaining to all materials incorporated as a part of my decorative concrete surface.

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***Name of Property Owner***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Name of Applicator/Independent Contractor***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Address of Decorative Concrete Surface***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***Signature of Applicator***

\_\_\_\_\_  
***City, State, Zip of Property Owner***

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***Date Acknowledgement Signed***