



WEST END CLAYBRICK (Pty) Ltd
Manufacturers & Suppliers of Face (FBS) & Semi-Face (FBA) CLAYBRICKS

We Supply Quality & Affordable
Face Bricks



CLEANING OF CLAY BRICKWORK

Prevention is better than Cure =

Cover face brickwork during building or renovating operations to prevent mortar and paint stains.

GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

Staining can mar the appearance of brickwork, but incorrect cleaning can cause permanent damage. Consequently any proposed method of cleaning should be tried out in a small un-obstructive area and left for at least a week to judge the results before the whole job is tackled. The techniques given here are intended for do-it-yourself work in removing relatively small areas of staining. A specialist contractor should be engaged for cleaning large areas of brickwork.

It is preferable to use wooden scrapers and stiff fibre brushes to avoid damaging the bricks; but where chemicals are to be used, the brickwork should be thoroughly wetted with clean water to prevent it absorbing the chemicals, and rinsed thoroughly with clean water afterwards. Adjacent features such as metal windows and the area at the foot of the wall should be protected from splashing of the chemicals.

In places where it is not possible to make a mess or where the stain is very localized, most of the cleaning liquids can be applied as a poultice by thickening them with an inert filler such as talc, bentonite or powdered chalk. Many of the chemicals recommended are caustic or poisonous, so care should be taken and protective clothing and goggles should be worn. Volatile solvents should only be used indoors under conditions of good ventilation. It is essential to identify the type of stain or deposit before any cleaning operations are undertaken.

PREPARATION

Remember to thoroughly wet the brickwork with clean water before applying any chemical, and wash down with clean water afterwards.

OIL

Sponge or poultice with white spirit, carbon, tetrachloride or trichloroethylene. Good ventilation is essential indoors.

EFFLORESCENCE

(White crystals or white furry deposit)

This usually disappears rapidly from new brickwork due to the action of wind and rain. Brushing or sponging down the wall at times of maximum efflorescence will also help. The salts brushed off should not be allowed to accumulate at the base of the wall, otherwise they may be carried back into the brickwork by subsequent rain.

LICHENS AND MOSSES

These can be killed with a solution of copper sulphate (1kg to 10l of water) or, alternatively, a proprietary weed killer. Vegetable growth is generally indicative of damp brickwork and will usually reappear if this basic cause is not cured. (Green staining which does not respond to this treatment is probably due to vanadium salts from within the bricks.)

PAINT

Apply commercial paint remover or a solution of trisodium phosphate (1 part to 5 parts of water by mass), allow the paint to soften, and remove with a scraper. Wash the wall with soapy water and finally rinse with clean water.

VANADIUM (GREEN)

Wash down with a solution of the sodium salt of ethylene diamine tetra acetic acid (1 part to 10 parts of water) or a 10% caustic soda solution. Do not wash the wall with clean water afterwards. (Hydrochloric acid should never be used on vanadium stains since it 'fixes' them and turns them brown. Such brown stains can sometimes be removed using a strong caustic soda solution, but there is a risk of damaging the bricks.)

RUST OR IRON

Wash down with a solution of oxalic acid (1 part to 10 parts of water by mass). (Brown staining which does not respond to this treatment, particularly at the junction of the brick and mortar, is probably due to manganese.)

MANGANESE (DARK BROWN)

Brush the stain with a solution of 1 part acetic acid and 1 part hydrogen peroxide in 6 parts of water.

TIMBER (BROWN OR GREY)

These stains are due to water spreading tannin or resin from the timber across the bricks and mortar, and can normally be removed by scrubbing with a 1:40 solution of oxalic acid in hot water.

WATER

Water running regularly down the surface of brickwork produces pattern staining, and this can frequently be removed by scrubbing after wetting with a high pressure mist spray of cold water. If this is not effective, the treatment recommended for mortar should be followed.

MORTAR

Where possible, remove larger pieces with a scraper, then wash down with a dilute solution of a proprietary acid cleaner. The manufacturer's instructions must be strictly followed. To remove mortar smear from brickwork having a potential to exhibit vanadium staining, the following procedure is recommended:

1. Wet the brickwork thoroughly with water.
2. Remove mortar with a proprietary acid cleaner
3. Remove any residual acid in the brickwork by washing down with water.
4. Treat the brickwork with a 10% solution of caustic soda or a 2% solution of potassium carbonate to prevent the recurrence of the stain.

LIME

Follow treatment recommended for 'Mortar'.

SMOKE AND SOOT

Scrub with a household detergent. The more stubborn patches can be removed from the brick pores using a poultice based on trichloroethylene, although good ventilation is needed indoors.

TAR

Except where bricks are liable to surface damage, remove excess with a scraper, then scrub with water and an emulsifying detergent. If necessary finally sponge or poultice with paraffin. Do not wet brickwork with water first.