



Making Marble and Granite Counters Kitchen-Safe

by Henry Spies

Sealing Stone Countertops

Q. How should I seal marble and granite countertops? To be used in a kitchen, a surface should be water-proof, heat resistant, stain resistant, and safe for food preparation.

A. Stone countertops should indeed be sealed, but it is not a one-step process. Marble especially is very porous and requires repeated coats of a sealer. The brand I like best is *Masterpiece Marble Care System* (cleaner, sealer, polish) available from Ceramaseal, Box 33322, Seattle, WA 98133; 206/365-9402. It reportedly provides all of the features you require.

The homeowner should apply a thin coat of sealer to marble about three times a week for the first month, once every two weeks for the next three months, and then once about every two or three months. Granite, being denser, requires fewer coats. The sealer is absorbed into the pores of the stone, and after the first year the stone is impervious to almost everything.

Treated Wood Foundations

Q. Can wood foundations built with pressure-treated wood be framed like conventional frame walls, or does the stud spacing need to be increased? How do you seal the outside to prevent water seepage?

A. The size and spacing of the studs in a treated wood foundation vary with the depth of fill against the foundation walls. An 8-foot foundation wall with 7 feet of fill, for example, will need to resist more weight than one with 4 feet of fill against it.

Depending upon the depth of fill and the soil characteristics, the studs may have to be as large as 2x8s, and the spacing as close as 12 inches. Before attempting a wood foundation you should get *Publication A-400, Permanent Wood Foundation*, free from the American Plywood Association, P.O. Box 11700, Tacoma, WA 98411. This publication contains all the structural design data needed to detail a "permanent" wood foundation.

To keep water out, a treated wood foundation must have a gravel drainage bed beneath the basement

or crawlspace floor, and drainage material (gravel or a drainage fabric) which extends up the foundation wall. In addition, the wall is wrapped in plastic film, preferably vinyl, as shown in the APA design manual.

OSB On Roofs

Q. Does OSB have the same nail-holding ability as plywood? I want to use it as roof sheathing, but I am nervous about blow-offs.

A. The nail-holding ability of OSB is similar to plywood. In a 1988 report in *Forest Products Journal*, the withdrawal strengths of both nails and staples in OSB panels were found to exceed those in plywood. It has been used as roof sheathing on thousands of houses, and I have not heard of any blow-offs due to the fasteners (nails or staples) failing.

Painting Asphalt Shingles

Q. Our clients are unhappy with the color of their roof now that the house has been painted. The asphalt shingles are less than 2 years old and are in

very good condition. Is there any way to change the color of the shingles without replacing them?

A. Several products on the market can be used to change the color of asphalt shingles, but the color choice is limited. There are both acrylic and elastomeric coatings, but they are usually restricted to black, white, and gray. The whites can be tinted to pastels by adding pigments, but no other dark colors are available. Elastomeric coatings are available from Kool-Seal (1499 Enterprise Parkway, Twinsburg, OH 44087; 800/321-0572) or Macklanburg-Duncan (M-D, 4041 N. Santa Fe, Oklahoma City, OK 73125; 800/678-3577). M-D also makes acrylic roof coatings that might be used. But whatever you use, check first to see whether the coatings would void the shingle manufacturer's warranty. ■

Henry Spies is a building consultant formerly with the Building Research Council of the University of Illinois. Questions should be sent to him at JLC, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.