



PROTECT YOUR PROJECT WITH A SEALER

Ensure your clients understand the importance of sealers, how they work and when to reseal their decorative concrete surfaces.

After installing a decorative concrete surface, it's important to protect it. Applying a coat of sealer will defend it from wear and tear and other damage so that the surface lasts longer and looks great for years to come.

SUNDEK's Vice President of Manufacturing and Finance, Marshall Seavers, is an engineer by trade and an authority on sealers. Here, he offers his insights into the importance of sealers, choosing a sealer, best practices, and more.

DISCUSSING SEALERS WITH YOUR CLIENT

If your client is considering skipping sealing to save money, explain that sealing is an important step they don't want to cut out of the process.

Here are some of the many benefits of sealers:

- Protects concrete from flaking, general wear and tear, color fading, oil spills, tire marks, elements (such as UV rays, rain, snow, dirt, saltwater, etc.), and more.
- Keeps chlorides and water from seeping in, preventing damage during freeze and thaw cycles on outdoor concrete surfaces.
- Prevents mold and mildew.
- Protects against staining, making the surface easier to clean.
- Can be combined with non-slip additives to make surfaces less slippery.
- Enriches and protects the color of the concrete.

Applying a coat of sealer will defend against wear and tear and other damage.



CHOOSING A SEALER

There are many sealers to choose from, so it's important to work with a contractor who can help you choose the right sealer for your job. Using the wrong sealer or making mistakes during the application process can ruin a beautiful decorative concrete surface, so make sure you're working with an experienced, reputable contractor who uses high-quality materials.

The American Society of Concrete Contractors recommends considering the following qualities when choosing the right sealer for your job:

- **Safety.** The sealer should not pose a slip risk or release fumes that are harmful to breathe in during application.
- **Appearance.** The sealer's gloss level should be appropriate for the desired aesthetic of the project—choose from matte, satin, or high gloss.
- **Performance.** The sealer should be appropriate for the location. Consider climate, exposure to the elements, and frequency of use.

TYPES OF SEALERS

There are two main types of sealers:

- **Film-forming sealers.** These types of sealers mechanically and chemically bond to the surface, creating a thin film. These sealers are sometimes described as "wear" layers because they form a layer over the top of the surface that

protects it. Anti-slip agents are typically combined with these types of sealers.

- **Penetrating sealers.** These types of sealers seep down into the pores of the surface and do not leave a film. Unlike film-forming sealers, they don't create a layer, so the texture of the decorative concrete surface remains even after the sealer is applied. These are commonly used with applications where the client is going for a more natural or matte look and doesn't want the surface to appear glossy.

A penetrating sealer, used on this pool deck, provides protection but isn't visible—it doesn't impact the color or add glossiness. Pictured: Pool deck in Dallas, TX, resurfaced by ATD Concrete Coatings.



HOW OFTEN DO SEALERS NEED TO BE REAPPLIED?

“Sealers are the sacrificial wear surface,” says Seavers. Because sealers are the wear layer, they need to be reapplied every so often—typically anywhere from 1 to 4 years. The exact amount of time to wait in between sealing depends on several factors:

- **Precipitation levels.** A surface that’s in a location that experiences lots of rain or snow is going to wear a lot faster than a surface located in a mild climate with little rainfall and no snow.
- **UV exposure.** An outdoor patio that sits in direct sun will need sealer reapplied more often than a shaded patio.

- **Cleaning requirements.** Frequent cleaning will wear out a sealer over time. For example, the deck at a busy community pool will naturally need to be cleaned more often than a pool deck at a residential pool—requiring more frequent sealing.
- **Frequency of use.** Generally, commercial surfaces wear out faster than residential surfaces because the amount of foot traffic or vehicular traffic is significantly higher.

“A good contractor will have an expectation of the lifespan of the sealer based on all these factors,” says Seavers.

At this residential pool deck, a film-forming sealer protects the surface while creating a slightly glossy appearance. Anti-slip additives were included to help prevent slip-and-fall accidents. Pictured: A pool deck in San Antonio, resurfaced by SUNDEK of San Antonio.



EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SEALER

After estimating the lifespan of the coat of sealer, the contractor should initiate one of the following:

- A maintenance program where they will clean the surface and reevaluate the sealer on a yearly basis.
- A time to come back and check that the sealer is still doing its job.

IMPORTANT: SEALERS & ANTI-SLIP AGENTS

On its own, a film-forming sealer can create a slick surface. If this is the case, your contractor needs to incorporate an anti-slip agent to prevent slip-and-fall accidents.

Sealing a pool deck, especially a community pool deck that will get frequent use, is necessary to protect it. Sealer will protect it from wear and tear and damage from things like chlorine and oils from sunscreen. Pictured: The pool deck at The Emerson in Centreville, VA, resurfaced by SUNDEK of Washington.

It's important to remember that anti-slip agents can sometimes wear faster than the sealer itself. For safety reasons, it's critical to frequently check that the surface has enough traction. If the anti-slip properties begin to wear, the surface needs to be resealed as soon as possible to avoid a hazard.

OVERVIEW: HOW SEALER IS APPLIED

Here's a general overview of what your contractor will do on the job site as they complete the process of applying sealer.

1. Prepare the surface. Verify that the surface is dry and free from dirt, wax, oil, chalk, incompatible paint, and residue from cleaners.
2. Check conditions.



- The temperature of the surface and the ambient temperature should not be any colder than 50°F, and it should not be any hotter than 90°F. If the temperature is too hot or too cold, you may end up with bubbles or other irregularities in the surface.

- If the project being sealed is outdoors, the area should be protected from dirt and other debris from falling on the surface during the sealing process.

3. Mix sealer. Your contractor should mix the sealer for at least a minute in case any separation occurred during storage or transportation.

4. Apply sealer to surface.

- The sealer can be applied using a roller or airless sprayer.
- Your contractor will allow the first coat to dry for about one to two hours.
- Then the second coat of the sealer will be applied.

TYPICAL DRY TIMES

After the sealing process is complete, it's important to allow the surface to dry properly.

This gorgeous surface at Mission Concepción Park in San Antonio, TX, is a result of the collaborative efforts of SUNDEK of San Antonio, artist Stacy Levy, and Blazing Lazer Art & Engraving. A sealer protected this work of art from foot traffic, the elements, and other potential damage.

Activity	Dry Time
Apply second coat	1–2 hours
Light traffic	4–6 hours (or more if surface seems tacky)
Vehicle traffic	2 full days

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