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RECOMMENDED CARE AND MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES FOR PRECAST CONCRETE TABLES, BENCHES & OTHER FURNISHINGS

Precast concrete furniture is a very durable and low maintenance product, however, in order to maximize its longevity and keep it looking like new for years it is necessary to conduct regular maintenance practices and repair damage caused by the elements and other sources.

Damage caused by the freeze/thaw cycles in late fall and early spring are probably the single biggest contributing factor the deterioration of concrete.

When surface sealants wear off and chips and scratches occur this allows water to penetrate the concrete surface. Horizontal surfaces such as tabletops and seating surfaces are most susceptible. This can result in damage from freeze/thaw cycles that occur in the early spring and late fall. When the daytime temperatures are well above freezing and at night they drop to well below freezing, water and/or snow on the concrete surfaces melts during the day, seeping into the tiny cracks in the surface of the concrete then at night this water freezes and expands. This process happens over and over again in the spring and fall causing the small cracks to become bigger; eventually the concrete surface will start to break up or spall as it is called. A regular maintenance program of repairing chips and scratches as they occur, along with applying a fresh coat of concrete sealer every other year or so will go a long way in helping to prolong the life of your valuable outside tables and benches. The best time to do this maintenance is in the fall so the protection will be there for that fall as well as in the spring when normally the most severe freeze/thaw cycles occur.

Other things you can do to prevent damage and premature deterioration are as follows:

: Remove the accumulated snow from on and around your furniture as soon as possible in the spring and wash the furniture to remove the chemicals that will have accumulated over the winter. This will reduce the amount of potential damage caused by the freeze/thaw cycles by removing the source as early as possible.

: Caution your staff and snow removal personnel NOT to throw snow and ice that has been treated with de-icing chemicals onto or around the patio furniture. Many types of de-icers, calcium chloride, calcium magnesium acetate and others can cause major early deterioration to the concrete. It is a common practice to apply de-icers to walkways leading to entryways. Often these entryways are adjacent to the patio area, as the patio isn't normally being used during the winter months it is convenient to shovel the melting ice with de-icers into that area in order to clear the walkway to the entrance. The chemicals accumulate there to very high concentrations and can be very harmful to the concrete furniture. This is not a good practice and should be avoided.

: Other maintenance such as regularly cleaning and checking for loose hardware will also help keep your furniture in good condition.

REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE PROCEDURES CONCRETE SEALERS

: Re applying protective concrete sealers is a relatively quick and simple procedure and for best results should be done approximately every 2 years depending on the climate you are in.

Below is a step-by-step procedure.

Tools and supplies needed:

- : 1 electric palm sander with a supply of 60 grit sandpaper.
- : 1 metal roller tray with a 9-inch roller and 2 or 3 good quality 5 mm. Lint Free roller sleeves.
- : A couple of solvent friendly paint brushes one 2 inch and one 3 or 4 inch.
- : Some clean rags and possibly a drop cloth
- : Cleaning solvent (normally Xylene)
- : Solvent Based High Gloss Concrete Sealer, most are Xylene based and can be purchased at most places that sell paint. One gallon will go a long way.

Procedure:

- 1/ Best done in the fall of the year, on a dry not too hot day. Avoid direct sun and very hot temperatures if possible as sealers will dry too quickly.
- 2/ Be sure the surfaces to be sealed are in good repair (see repairing damage below) clean of dirt and grease.
- 3/ With the palm sander, sand all smooth surfaces as necessary to remove scratches and graffiti. The Xylene Solvent can also be used to remove graffiti. Sanding is also necessary in order to rough up the surface so the sealer will bond properly. Exposed aggregate areas don't need to be sanded but do need to be clean.
- 4/ Wipe the sanded surfaces off with a clean dry rag.
- 5/ Roll on a thin coat of sealer, try to use quick even strokes and avoid re rolling as the sealer will start to dry immediately and will stick to the roller. A second coat can be applied as soon as the first is dry to the touch, normally by the time you are finished rolling 2 or 3 tables you can apply a second coat, two thin coats are better than one thick coat. You can use your brush to catch drips and to apply sealer to any necessary exposed aggregate parts.
- 6/ Use your Solvent to clean up and you are done for a couple of years. The furniture will normally be ready to use in a couple of hours.

REPAIRING CHIPS AND DEEP SCRATCHES

: Mix, a small portion at a time, of normal Portland Type 10 Cement powder with water and Elmer's Glue All, use about 2 parts water to 1 part glue and add enough to the cement powder to make a mixture the consistency of thick pancake batter. Don't mix too much at a time, as it will dry out on you. Apply a thin coat of glue to the area you are about to repair then fill the area with the cement mixture and smooth as well as possible with a trowel or any straight edge tool. Overfull a little is better than underfull. Cover with a damp rag to slow the drying for a better cure and let cure overnight. Sand with the 60-grit sandpaper to smooth and blend. Apply sealer as above.