

## Which Comes First...the Caulk or the Paint?

I'd like to relate a simple question and offer an enlightened answer to a question that I'm asked maybe 50 times per year by sealant applicators: *Should I apply a particular sealant product over the paint or should I apply the sealant first and then paint?* Well as you might suspect, the answer is different depending on the application...

In some cases the choice of sealant will have a large influence on the answer. For example if you are applying a silicone, you may want to consider the fact that silicones are not paintable with typical coatings; and in fact may only be painted with a silicone based product. This means no latex or alkyd-based materials will cover or adhere to a silicone sealant. In this case you may want to paint or apply a high performance coating *before* sealing a joint or seam. Of course the sealant is now relying on the coating to adhere well to the construction surface in order to keep out the dreaded water or air. Field and/or laboratory testing can be carried out to ensure that this system approach to sealing a joint will perform over time. Assuming testing has been carried out or enough field use is under one's belt to instill a sense of confidence, then this approach is fine.

Adhesion of paint to sealant is more problematic. Because sealants are generally able to withstand more movement than the coating applied over it, an inconsistency can result with regards to the movement capabilities of the respective materials. The results of the inconsistency become obvious as I'm sure most of you who have read this far have seen cracking coatings over sealant joints. Although this cracking does not present an immediate concern to expansion joint performance, it looks unpleasing to even the casual observer and creates the possibility of water getting under the cracked coating and eventually leading to further deterioration. The only real solution is to use an elastomeric coating with movement capability at least equal to the sealant. However this still doesn't guarantee a long lasting, aesthetically-pleasing sealant joint line and it's important to recognize that adhesion and compatibility could still be an issue. *The only real long-term solution is successful field testing and use combined with laboratory testing and, of course, not to apply paint over sealant at all.*

Various sealant and coating manufacturers have developed and recommended sealant/coating systems which claim to be successful as far as working well together. Some sealant manufacturers are in the business of supplying both coatings and sealants in which case the testing has already been conducted and you the owner and contractor can usually proceed with confidence when selecting such pre-tested manufacturer-proven systems.

It goes without saying that using a tinted sealant designed to match the building aesthetics would be the ideal approach to achieve the desired color as opposed to the risks associated with painting. But if this isn't an option, remember to do your homework with regards to compatibility and adhesion concerns with all materials used in a waterproofing system *before* undertaking a full scale installation. A phone call or two may end up saving your business. Not to mention the color of your hair.

*If there is a subject you would like to see discussed and published on the Master Caulksmith section at Pecora.com, simply direct your request or question via e-mail to Cannonr@pecora.com. I appreciate the opportunity to share my many years of sealant knowledge and experience in the interest of supporting those who strive for perfection throughout the waterproofing industry.*

