

**Aqua Mix Penetrating Type Sealers - Do they make surfaces more slippery?**

For as long as we can remember there have been a number of stock questions asked about sealers.

1. How long do they last?
2. Will they change the colour of the tile or stone?
3. How do they work?

One of the most common is:

4. Will your Aqua Mix penetrating type sealers make the sealed surface more slippery to walk on?

This is an interesting question because the Aqua Mix position has always been that our penetrating sealers do **NOT** affect the slip resistance of the sealed surface. This is in contrast to some manufacturers who claim that their penetrating sealers in fact increase the slip resistance of the sealed surface. So we thought this was an interesting subject to look at to see if we can get to the bottom of what appears to be contradictory claims about similar technology.

To see if a penetrating sealer can affect slip resistance firstly you need to understand how they work. Aqua Mix penetrating sealers work by sitting just below the surface of the stone or tile where they cure into slightly different compounds and configurations depending on the active ingredient. Therefore unlike surface coatings they do not coat or sit on top of the surface. This means that the natural surface of the sealed stone or tile is left untouched and is the reason why Aqua Mix penetrating sealers do not affect the natural slip resistance of the surface. This statement by itself to be accurate obviously needs to be supported by hard scientific evidence and this is where the measurement of slip resistance plays its part.

Slip resistance in the tile and stone industries is measured mainly by measuring the coefficient of friction of a surface, commonly referred to as a surfaces' COF. Different countries have a variety of systems for measuring COF. Some use the Tortus test (most commonly used in the USA), some the Pendulum and others quantify slip resistance by using human walkers (ramp test). For the purpose of this discussion we will stick to the Tortus test that expresses COF as a decimal where 0.50 and above is seen as acceptable slip resistance and below 0.50 unacceptable. So to recap, if an Aqua Mix penetrating sealer is not going to adversely affect natural slip resistance then under testing it must not lower the COF result of the unsealed tile or stone. Conversely for the manufacturers that claim their penetrat-

ing sealers positively affect slip resistance the sealed COF should be higher than the natural result.

Below are some wet Tortus test results on different surfaces for us to scrutinize.

**SOTTER ENGINEERING CORPORATION**  
26705 Loma Verde, Mission Viejo, CA 92694 • Phone (949) 582-0889; Fax (949) 916-2193

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**COEFFICIENT OF FRICTION (COF), WET**  
Test Report

Tested by: J. George Sotter, P.E., Ph.D. Page 1 of 2  
Sotter Engineering Corporation

Date Tested: November 19, 2003

Test Description:  
The TORTUS dynamic slip resistance measuring instrument, utilizing a Four S rubber slider, was used for dry measurements. Wet measurements were taken with the TORTUS instrument using a trace (three drops per 250 milliliters of water) of Triton X-100 wetting agent in distilled water.

Surface Tested: Various Stones & Tiles

Wet Surface Results		
Stone/Tile	Treatment	COF
Slate	Untreated	0.73
	Aqua Mix "Slate Sealer" ("Seal & Finish Low Sheen")	0.68
Limestone (Durango)	Untreated	0.71
	Aqua Mix "ProSolv 10 Sealer"	0.81
	"Stone Sealer"	0.78
	"Stone Sealer's Choice WB" ("Sealer's Choice 15 Gold")	0.79
Terra Cotta	Untreated	0.72
	"Floor Shine & Hardener"	0.47

The first thing to notice is the result of the Seal'N'Finish Low Sheen which is a coating sealer. The coating sealer reduces the wet COF from 0.73 to 0.68, which is totally normal and understandable as you are now walking on a man made coating instead of the natural micro textured surface of the slate. The same is true of the Floor Shine and Hardener applied over the terracotta tile. However the results of the three Aqua Mix penetrating sealers are completely the opposite. All three actually increase the COF – Sealers Choice 0.79, Penetrating Sealer (labelled Stone Sealer in this test) 0.78, Pro Solv 10 0.81 with the untreated limestone at 0.71. These results would appear in some ways to contradict the Aqua Mix claim that our penetrating sealers do not affect the surface COF and instead back up some competitors claims that penetrating type sealers positively affect the COF and in doing so make a slippery surface less slippery. However the numbers and the reason for these increases need further investigation because in this case the numbers do not tell the total truth. The application instructions for most penetrating sealers and definitely Aqua Mix ones are almost all the same. One or two thin coats that after a specified dwell time are then wiped dry so that no excess sealer is left on the surface.



The sealer is then supposedly left to cure just underneath the natural surface. However it is physically impossible not to leave a small residue on the surface.

Firstly apply droplets of water onto the sealed surface and you will see high initial water beading. Then wipe dry and lightly scrub the surface with a white plastic pad. Reapply the water droplets and observe the level of water beading. What you will notice is that after scrubbing the beading or surface tension of the water is greatly relaxed. This is caused by the fact that the scrubbing has removed the small amount of sealer residue that was creating the initially high water beading. In other words prior to removal the sealer residue is acting like an ultra thin coating.



Fig 1 . Before the removal of invisible sealer residue, shows high water beading.

It is this very same sealer residue that we believe creates the apparent increase in the sealed surface COF. Once the sealer residue is removed, the COF reduces back to that of natural untreated surface. This helps explain why some manufacturers claim their penetrating sealers increase the sealed surface COF. They are simply quoting the test numbers arrived at under the standard test method.



Fig 2. Relaxed water beading due to removal of sealer residue

However what this fails to acknowledge is that the sealer residue that creates this initially high and seemingly beneficial increase in slip resistance will quickly wear away under foot and vehicular traffic returning the surface COF back to its original state. Therefore the Aqua Mix claim that our penetrating sealers do not affect the surface COF (and certainly do not increase it) is an accurate one. It acknowledges the fact that the sealer residue will quickly be removed in service, fast returning the slip resistance (COF) of the surface to its natural state.





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For more information visit [www.fullfrontalexpo.com](http://www.fullfrontalexpo.com)

Aqua Mix will be participating at Full Frontal Tile & Stone Expo which will be held at Sydney Convention & Exhibition Centre at Darling Harbour from 20-22 August 2009. We will be doing demonstrations on honing and polishing of stone at Stand G7

## Technical Bulletin

### Slip Resistance: Aqua Mix Penetrating Type Sealers

The following Aqua Mix penetrating sealers do not change the slip resistance or COF (Co-efficient Of Friction) of a sealed surface:

- Sealer's Choice Gold
- Ultra Solv
- Pro Solv
- Penetrating Sealer

#### Below surface technology:

Aqua Mix penetrating sealers cure just below the surface of the stone or tile rather than on top of the surface and hence are not coatings. Hence they leave the surface COF in its original state when applied as per label instructions.

#### Penetrating Sealers increase a tile or stones slip resistance (COF)!

Our COF test results commonly see a slight increase in the sealed surfaces' COF just after sealing. This is due to the small amount of sealer residue that bonds to the surface after application that can increase surface friction. However as our penetrating sealers are not designed to be coatings this small excess sealer residue is quickly abraded off the surface through foot traffic returning the COF to its original state. When doing any COF testing on surfaces sealed with penetrating sealers, Aqua Mix recommends lightly scrubbing the surface to remove any excess sealer before taking the COF results.

Note: COF results are available on request from Aqua Mix for the Aqua Mix penetrating sealers mentioned in this bulletin.



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## Aqua Mix Trained Independent Care & Maintenance Applicator Course – Sydney NSW – August 2009

Applicants Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Suburb: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Post Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Website: \_\_\_\_\_

1. How did you hear about our seminar? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How long have you been in the tile industry or hard surface business? \_\_\_\_\_
4. What do you or your company specialize in? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What do wish to gain from this seminar? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Where do you plan to offer this new service? \_\_\_\_\_
8. Do you currently work with the Aqua Mix Products? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Course allocations will be on a first paid first choice basis.

**IAP Course:** Tuesday 18th & Wednesday 19th August 2009 (8:30am–5:00pm both days)  
Unit 7, 38 Waratah St, Kirrawee NSW 2232

10. If you require accommodation, please contact on of the following Hotels:

- A. **Quest Apartments**, Cronulla Beach Ph: 02 8536 3600      B. **Rydges Cronulla Beach** Ph: 02 9527 3100  
C. **Cronulla Motor Inn**, Cronulla Ph: 02 9523 6800      D. **Metro Inn**, Miranda Ph: 02 9525 7577

(Shuttle bus will **only** pick-up from outside Quest Apartments at **8.00am sharp** daily for transport to Course facility)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Cost

\$540.00 plus GST = \$594.00 Total  
Includes: Training & Technical Manual, Morning & Afternoon Tea, Lunch.  
Should a cancellation occur, a \$200.00 plus GST cancellation fee will apply.

### Payment

Payment must be received **in full** at time of booking to confirm your place.  
Course allocations will be on a first payed first choice basis.

Please forward your completed application form and full payment (cheque/money order or direct deposit) to:

Aqua Mix (Aust)  
PO Box 3001  
Kirrawee NSW 2232

### Bank Details for payment

**Bank** ANZ Sutherland NSW  
**BSB** 012-430  
**Account Number** 108 748 563  
**Account Name** Aqua Mix (Aust)

(Please fax confirmation of transaction to 02 9521 5222)



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### For more information contact

A'ngie Kokkiliaris at Aqua Mix (Aust) on 02 9521 4000 or 0413 059 935 or email [info@aquamix.com.au](mailto:info@aquamix.com.au)  
[www.aquamix.com.au](http://www.aquamix.com.au)