



Building Newsflash

Termite Management – Painting of Exposed Slab Edges

Purpose

The purpose of this Newsflash is to provide advice on whether an exposed slab edge used as part of a termite management system can be painted. For aesthetics reasons, some people would like to apply a painted finish to the slab edge. Some building certifiers, however, are reluctant to permit this because of concerns that the painted surface may also provide termites with a concealed entry point into the building if it blisters or bubbles.

Building Code of Australia requirements

Part 3.1.3 of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) requires a termite management system to be installed so that damage to all susceptible primary building elements is minimised. Compliance with AS 3660.1 – Termite management – New Building work is deemed-to-satisfy the performance requirements of the BCA.

Requirements of AS 3660.1

One of the acceptable methods of treatment referred to in AS 3660.1 is an exposed slab edge around the perimeter of the building.

Section 4.4 of AS 3660.1 states that where slab edge exposure is used as part of a termite barrier system, the exposed face of the perimeter of the slab shall be off-the-form and shall not exhibit areas of rough surface, honeycombing or ripples. It shall be exposed for a minimum of 75 mm above finished ground, landscaping or paving level to permit ready detection of termite entry and shall not be rendered, tiled, clad or concealed by flashings, adjoining structures, paving or soil.

The Standard does not specifically rule out painting the slab edge, however, there is a risk that certain painted finishes may blister. Also, applied finishes, such as those mentioned in section 4.4 of the Standard, may delaminate and provide termites with a possible concealed entry point into the building.

Painting the slab edge

The Department has received advice on this matter and is of the opinion that painting an exposed slab edge may be permitted by the building certifier subject to the following-

- The slab edge is sound, well compacted concrete free of voids.
- Water based paints are used and the total film thickness of the coating is not greater than 1mm.

- Hydrocarbon based paints are not used as they can blister from water vapour being trapped behind them. Voids developed by these blisters can conceal mud tubes used by subterranean termites.
- High-build, textured or sand filled type coatings are not used.
- The surface of the slab is free from defects such as “honeycombing” and cracks that may assist in concealing (behind the coating) the entry by subterranean termites.
- Where any defect in the slab (as described above) exists, it is rectified prior to painting, using a non-shrink cement-compatible material having a finish with a Durometer D Shore hardness greater than 80.

Please contact Mr Peter Rourke on (07) 323 71714 should you require further information regarding this matter.