



Building Newsflash

Replacement of Previous Newsflash Issued on 29.10.01 – “Termite Management – Painting of Exposed Slab Edges”

The Department is aware there has been some difficulty interpreting some of the advice given in a previous Newsflash dated 29 October 2001 concerning the painting of exposed slab edges used as part of the termite management system.

Advice was given concerning the type of paint to be used and the hardness of any materials used to repair defects in the slab edge. To clarify these issues, the advice has been rewritten in more user-friendly terms. Accordingly this Newsflash replaces the Newsflash previously issued on 29 October 2001.

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.
- The paint is acrylic or water based and not more than 3 coats are applied (ie, an undercoat and two top coats)
- Oil 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 strength and durability characteristics not less than those of the concrete surface it is being applied to (sand/cement mixtures are not appropriate, however, some proprietary brand epoxy/cement grouts may be suitable).

Please contact Mr Peter Rourke on (07) 32371714 if you require any further information regarding this matter.