

Re-Print of GANA Glass Informational Bulletin TD-02-0402 **Heat-Treated Glass Surfaces Are Different**

Industry Cleaning Procedures Must be followed to Avoid Glass Damage

As the use of glass increased over recent years, issues of strength, safety and thermal performance became increasingly important design considerations. The availability of tinted and coated glasses had a dramatic impact on glass use in building projects. The vastly expanded aesthetic options combined with the improved energy conserving and comfort capabilities of tinted and coated glasses allowed architects to use more glass, as well as larger sizes in their designs. A consequence of this trend was a corresponding increase in the use of tempered and heat-strengthened glass in order to meet both thermal and wind load design requirements. The demand for tempered glass further increased with the passing of safety glazing Legislation in 1977, which mandated its use in certain locations.

Currently, there are two types of heat-treated glass as defined in the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) C1048 - Standard Specification for Heat-Treated Flat Glass – Kind HS, Kind FT Coated and Uncoated Glass. The two types are heat-strengthened (Kind HS) and fully tempered (Kind FT). Both types of glass are produced using the same equipment. A majority of the heat-treated glass produced over the last 30 years has been fabricated in horizontal roller hearth furnaces. The preparation stage for the heat-treatment process requires annealed float glass to be cut to the required final size, the edges to be treated according to the specified finish (commonly seamed or polished) and the glass to be washed. The process then requires the glass to be transported on horizontal rollers through an oven and heated to approximately 1,150°F (621° C). Upon exiting the furnace, the glass is rapidly cooled (quenched) by blowing air uniformly onto both surfaces simultaneously. The cooling process leaves the surfaces of the glass in a state of compression and the central core in compensating tension.

The color, clarity, chemical composition and light transmission characteristics of glass remain essentially unchanged after heat-treating. Likewise, hardness, specific gravity, expansion coefficient, softening point, thermal conductivity, solar optical properties and stiffness remain unchanged by the heat-treating process. The only physical properties that change are improved flexural and tensile strength, and improved resistance to thermal stresses and thermal shock. Under uniform loading, heat-treated glass is stronger than annealed glass of the same size and thickness. The heat-treating process does change the break pattern of the glass, i.e. fully tempered glass disintegrates into relatively small pieces meeting the safety glazing requirements and thereby greatly reducing the likelihood of serious cutting or piercing injuries. As mentioned, the heat-treating process typically involves the transport of very hot glass on rollers. As a result of this soft glass-to-roller contact, some glass surface changes will occur. Minute glass particles (fines) from the glass cutting and edging process, typical manufacturing plant air-borne debris or dust, refractory particles from the tempering oven roof, as well as external airborne dirt and grit carried into the plant by the large volumes of quench air used in the process, may adhere to one or both glass surfaces. Also, the physical contact of the soft glass surface with the rollers may result in a marking or dimpling of the glass surface. Current glass quality specifications contained in ASTM C 1036- Standard Specification for Flat Glass, establish the size and number of glass imperfections allowed based on specific visual inspection criteria. The glass surface conditions listed above are not usually visible to the eye under normal visual circumstances. These surface conditions do not threaten the visual nor structural integrity of the product, and are not reason for rejection of glass under the ASTM consensus standards.

Heat-Treated Glass Surfaces Are Different (cont.)

However, despite being invisible, such surface conditions can be detectable to the touch. This difference in “feel”, between annealed and heat-treated glass, can lead to issues during cleaning of the glass, as glass cleaning workers attempt to remove microscopic particles. With the best of intentions, they may attempt to scrape particles that can be felt, but not seen, and very often end up scratching and the glass industry takes extreme care to avoid glass scratches by protecting all glass surfaces during glass manufacturing and fabrication, as well as during all shipping and handling required to deliver the glass to the end user. A large percentage of damaged glass results from non-glass trades working near glass. This will include painters, sparklers, ironworkers, landscapers, carpenters and others who are part of the construction process. They may inadvertently lean tools against the glass, splash materials onto the glass and/or clean the glass incorrectly, any of which can permanently damage glass.

One of the common mistakes made by non-glass trades people, including glass cleaning contractors, is their use of razor blades or other scrapers on a large portion of the glass surface. Using 2,3,4,5 inch and larger blades to scrape a window clean carries a large probability for causing irreparable damage to glass.

The entire industry of glass manufacturers, fabricators, distributors, and installers neither condones nor recommends widespread scraping of glass surfaces with metal blades or knives. Such scraping will often permanently damage or scratch the glass surfaces. When paint or other construction materials cannot be removed with normal cleaning procedures a new 1” razor blade may need to be used only on non-coated glass surfaces. The razor blade should be used on small spots only. Scraping should be done in one direction only. Never scrape in a back and forth motion as this could trap particles under the blade that could scratch the glass. This practice may cause hairline concentrated scratches, which are not normally visible when looking through the glass, but may be visible under certain lighting conditions.

Members of the Glass Association of North America (GANA) publish information relating to jobsite protection and cleaning of architectural glass products. In order to ensure long-term performance of the glass in a building, GANA encourages glazing contractors, general contractors, building management and owners to be aware of conditions that can damage glass and to follow the handling and cleaning guidelines provided by their glass producer and fabricator.

Consult the GANA website (www.glasswebsite.com) for additional information on glass and glazing applications and links to members providing additional technical resources.

The Glass Association of North America (GANA) has produced this Glass Information Bulletin solely to provide general information as to basic proper procedures for cleaning architectural glass products. The Bulletin does no purport to state that any one particular type of glass cleaning process or procedure should be used in all applications or even in any specific application. The user of this Bulletin has the responsibility to ensure the cleaning instructions from the glass supplier are followed. GANA disclaims any responsibility for any specific results relating to the use of this Bulletin, for any errors or omissions contained in the Bulletin, and for any liability for loss or damage or any kind arising out of the use of this Bulletin.

