

Technical Tip

Removing Dried Finishes, Sealants, Borates and Cleaners From Surfaces.

All of our stains and sealants are water-based and while they are still wet most clean up quite easy with just soap and water. That's usually the best method to use for cleaning our wet products off of windows, gutters, downspouts and other smooth surfaces but there are occasions when other clean-up techniques should be used to remove some of our textured sealants from wood surfaces. Obviously soap and water won't remove dried or cured products so it's good to know how to remove them too. Just remember to always try a small spot before using any type of cleaner over a large area. You never know if it will discolor a surface without checking it first. Now let's take a look at some specific products and situations.

All LIFELINE™ interior and exterior stains and Advance™ Topcoats

If you are working on small areas at a time it's not difficult to carry a damp rag with you and wipe off any product that gets onto surfaces that you don't want stained or topcoated. But if you are using an airless sprayer and overspray gets onto surfaces like windows, gutters or doorknobs, there is a good chance that the product will dry before you get a chance to wipe it off. If the stain or topcoat has been on for less than an hour, isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol may remove it but if it has had enough time to start curing it will probably require something stronger. The most effective group of products we've found for removing dried finishes are automotive glass cleaners available at most automotive supply stores. There are several brands of aerosol foam cleaners that work but be sure that removing bugs, grime and tar is on the label. If it is it will probably do a good job. You need a foam type product to assure that it does not quickly run off of the surface. If you are attempting to remove the stain or topcoat off a painted surface be sure to test a small spot to make sure that it does not discolor or remove the paint too.



Examples of some products that can be used to clean LIFELINE and Advance off widows and other smooth surfaces. None of these products are endorsed by Perma-Chink Systems, Inc.

Energy Seal[®] and Perma-Chink[®]

Both of these sealants contain an aggregate that gives them their texture. If you get either one on a smooth, slick surface they can be easily removed with a damp rag. But if you get a clump on a rough surface like bare or stained wood, the aggregate and polymer will get imbedded in minute nooks and crannies on the surface and it becomes very difficult to completely wipe it off without smearing it over a wide area. If the wood is bare, once stained the spot may stick out from the surrounding area since the sealant residue will change the porosity of the wood. It is sometimes better to allow the Perma-Chink or Energy Seal time to partially cure, then try to roll it off with your thumb and fingers.

Once Perma-Chink or Energy Seal fully cure they become very difficult to remove from just about any surface. The best way to remove them from hard smooth surfaces is to scrape or cut them off with a razor knife. If they cure on bare or stained wood they are almost impossible to remove without doing some damage to the surface and the finish. Cured Perma-Chink and Energy Seal is impervious to most solvents but if you want to soften them for easier removal you can use a paint stripper containing methylene chloride. You'll need to put on a thick coat and since it needs to be left on the sealant for at least four to six hours, it's best to cover it with plastic film to keep it from drying out. When the sealant softens you can try removing it with a scraper or stiff nylon bristled brush. Don't use a wire brush. No matter which method you've used to remove Perma-Chink or Energy Seal, if the surface was stained you'll need to do some touch-up work. Sand the spots with 60 or 80 grit sandpaper then touch-up using a rag rather than a brush.

Woodsman[™] and Check Mate[®] 2

Since neither of these smooth surfaced sealants contain an aggregate they are much easier to remove with a wet rag as long as it is done quickly. Once they cure you'll need to use the same techniques as removing cured Perma-Chink or Energy Seal.

Log End Seal[™]

Wet Log End Seal is fairly easy to removing using just water but once it cures it becomes just about impossible to remove without physically grinding or sanding it off. The problem is that since it is a soft polymer it will quickly fill sandpaper or a sanding disk. Probably the best tool to use is a Wood Shark. If the teeth of the Wood Shark do become filled with polymer it can be burned away with a blow torch and the Wood Shark can be reused indefinitely.

Borates, Wood ReNew[™] and Log Wash[™]

Borates (Shell-Guard[®] Concentrate, Shell-Guard[®] RTU and Armor-Guard[®]), Wood ReNew and Log Wash are all very water soluble but if not adequately rinsed off of glass or painted surfaces, they can leave a white haze. The best thing to use to remove any borate, Wood ReNew or Log Wash residue is pure warm water. Don't add any ammonia, soap or detergent. Once the residue is washed off you can use a commercial glass cleaner to remove any streaks.

M-Balm[™] and E-Wood[™]

Both of these products are two component epoxies that are not water soluble so just soap and water won't have much effect on them. You can use white vinegar to clean up the individual components or even mixed material before it cures. To remove cured M-Balm and E-Wood you have no choice but to grind or sand it off. That's not difficult with E-Wood putty but since M-Balm soaks into the wood surface sanding will still leave the wood impregnated with epoxy and prevent that area from properly taking a stain.