

Cleaning Solvent

Information for use with GE Construction Sealants

Commonly used solvents for cleaning substrates prior to wet sealing with silicone are:

Isopropyl Alcohol (IPA)*	Toluene
Xylene	Acetone

***Isopropyl alcohol** (also sold as *Isopropanol*) is a common household item readily available in local markets. However, this over-the-counter IPA is often diluted with water (at times up to 30%) as well as moisturizing additives and this class of household products should not be used as a cleaning solvent prior to applying silicone sealant (the additives may interfere with adhesion). Only pure industrial grade IPA should be used of 99% purity or greater.

Denatured alcohol is ethanol to which poisonous and foul-tasting chemicals have been added to make it unfit for drinking. There are numerous recipes for denaturing alcohol; some add methanol, some add tertiary butyl alcohol, some add gasoline, etc. Denatured Alcohol is not recommended for use as a cleaning solvent prior to applying silicone sealant because of the variability of additives, which may or may not yield reproducible results.

Note: the above solvents are suggested only as readily available and commonly used materials. With each specific application, the end user must determine the effectiveness of each particular combination of solvent/substrate & sealant chosen. As always, adhesion testing is recommended prior to sealing.

TECHNIQUES FOR SOLVENT CLEANING

1. Always use clean, fresh solvent, of the type recommended for the particular surfaces it will contact.
2. Follow all precautions on the solvent warning label and/or SDS.
3. Use clean, white rags or paper towels for cleaning
4. Use a "two rag wipe" technique. One rag is dampened with solvent; the second rag is used to wipe the wet solvent from the surface. Allowing solvent to dry on the surface without wiping with a second dry, absorbent cloth, merely re-deposit's the contaminant as the solvent dries.
5. Never dip the rag in the cleaning solvent as this can contaminate the solvent.
6. Always use clean containers for solvent use and storage.
7. Change to clean rags frequently, as you see they are becoming dirty. It's easy to see the dirt if you use white rags.
8. Do not spread the material being removed by the solvent over the face of the area you are cleaning (e.g. metal curtain walls). Any residue left may discolor or stain the face of the panels.

