

Fabricator's Guide: Answering Customer Questions After Installation

By asking the following questions, you can find out whether your customer is caring for their IceStone durable surfaces according to the *IceStone Care and Maintenance Guide* and help them solve their problems.

Before visiting a job site to consult a customer, make sure the customer sends you a photo of the problem area or ask for a very detailed description of how the area looks and feels. It is important to make sure that terms like *etching*, *scrapes*, *stains* and *discoloration* are defined so that problems can be properly solved.

For example: etching is when the surface is eaten away and feels rough. If the customer describes the situation as merely "rough", perhaps there is build up on the surface that could be taken off with a razor blade.

QUESTIONS TO ASK:

1. Does a drop of water bead or is it absorbed quickly by the surface?

If the water beads up, then the surface is well sealed and resistant to water. If water is quickly absorbed, then the surface needs to be re-sealed.

2. What color IceStone surface do you have installed? Where is the problem?

Determining if they have a light or dark color of IceStone will help you recommend an appropriate solution. Knowing where the problem is will help you determine how it got there and how to prevent future problems. For example, stains underneath the coffee machine may be prevented by using a tray underneath the machine to catch drips.

3. When was the surface installed?

If the surface was sealed over a year or two ago, the surface is probably in need of re-sealing. Since sealers are reformulated by the manufacturer every now and then, it is possible that an older formula of a sealer works differently than the current formula. Make sure to check that the sealer has not expired or been exposed to freezing conditions.

4. Who fabricated the customer's IceStone surface?

Follow up with the fabricator to find out what they sealed the surface with, when the job was completed, and if any problems occurred during the project.

5. What do you clean the surface with on a daily basis?

The answer should be dish soap or mild cleaners with a pH between 7 and 10. We highly recommend TileLab Grout & Tile Cleaner or TileLab OneStep Cleaner & Resealer, which are available at most hardware stores. We also recommend Simple Green's Stone Cleaner and everyday dish soaps like Seventh Generation's All Purpose Cleaner.

You should remind the customer to avoid using cleaning products or soaps containing water soluble, inorganic, or crystallizing salts, ammonia, or acids (e.g. Windex, Clorox, etc). If the customer is not already familiar with the *IceStone Care and Maintenance Guide*, take this time to introduce them to the recommended daily maintenance techniques and make sure they are not doing anything covered in the "Things to Avoid" section.

6. Have you ever used any other cleaners or cleaning techniques on the surface?

If any of the following products have been used on the customer's IceStone surface, the sealer's integrity may have been compromised: abrasive cleaners, bleach based cleaners, ammonia based cleaners, lemon/citrus, rust/paint removers, lacquer thinner, oven/metal/toilet/tile and drain cleaners, fingernail polish remover.

7. Have you or anyone else re-sealed or waxed the surface since installation?

Not all sealers are compatible with other sealers. If sealers are applied in the wrong sequence they can create strange textures and discoloration. Check to make sure that the penetrating sealer was applied first, then the topical sealer, and then the wax.

Penetrating sealers should always be applied first so that they can truly get in to the pores of the surface. Topical sealers contain acrylics or urethanes and are tricky to apply because they can result in a "plastic" look. Always follow the manufacturer's directions when applying sealers. Waxes need to be reapplied regularly as they will wear off. Before re-sealing, make sure the surface feels clean and smooth or use a coating remover to remove the previous sealer.

8. Have any food or beverages been spilled or exposed to your IceStone surface?

Remind your customers if acidic drinks or foods are spilled and not wiped off, the surface may develop a patina. If the customer does not want a patina to develop, remind them to wipe up spills immediately, keep their surfaces waxed and re-sealed frequently.

9. Do you place hot pans and other hot things directly on your IceStone surface?

Customers should use hot pads and trivets to keep hot pots, pans, or other items off the surface as their heat will compromise the integrity of the sealer.

10. Is water left on the surface often? Do you have hard or soft water?

Depending on the minerals in the water, standing water and soap scum may cause the surface to feel rough. Extra attention should be given to the sealing areas around sinks and bathtubs to assure the sealer lasts in these crucial areas. A very thin layer of a topical sealer or a wax can help prevent standing water from roughing up the surface.

11. Do you cut directly on the surface ever? Occasionally?

Cutting on the surface will not damage the surface, but it could damage the sealer. To be safe, use cutting boards to prepare food.