

## Removing A Plumber's Putty Stain ◀ ▶ My Opinion

*Have a technical question? Check MIA's Dimension Stone Design Manual VII first. If you can't find the answer there, contact MIA's Technical Director, Chuck Muehlbauer at [technical@marble-institute.com](mailto:technical@marble-institute.com). This FREE service is for MIA members only! (Non-member charge: \$85/hour) As a courtesy to other members, please limit phone conversations to ten minutes per call. All opinions and advice provided by Chuck Muehlbauer or anyone else from MIA are provided as general information only. MIA assumes no responsibility and shall not be liable for any damages resulting from your use of this information. Any information provided by the MIA are the exclusive property of MIA and shall not be disseminated, republished, or reproduced in any manner without the prior written consent of MIA.*

**Q.** Is there an industry prescribed viewing distance for stone approval? We supplied some material, and the designer is literally using a magnifying glass to look for defects.

**A.** There exists no American generated consensus document, to my knowledge, that addresses this. It has been a topic of discussion within our technical advisory committees, and I expect we will include discussion on it in future *Dimension Stone Design Manual* updates. There is a European standard that addresses this issue very clearly. EN 12059 states "..... comparison between production sample and reference sample shall be carried out by placing the reference sample against the production sample and viewing them at a distance of about two meters under normal daylight conditions....." The European standard seems reasonable to me, and I anticipate that we will soon have a stateside standard that is consistent with the EN standard.

**Q.** We're looking at a project in our town where we need to anchor a 96" x 48" x 3/4" exterior granite panel to a CMU backup wall. What is the best type of anchor to use in this case?

**A.** I don't know of an anchor that will work in this instance. Since the panel is exterior, you have windload, and a 3/4" panel won't likely span 48" between anchors without excessive flexural stresses. You also need perimeter anchors,

which typically don't have high capacities in 3/4" stone. Adhering the stone to the backup isn't a good option either, since the expansion difference between the stone and substrate would be too great. If enough cavity space exists, one could engineer strongbacks that are anchored to the panel with back anchors, and then anchor the strongbacks to the substrate. Or if space allows, one could consider precasting it to a concrete backer with hairpin anchors. A much simpler solution would be to revise the design to smaller face sizes, thicker stone, or both.

**Q.** How do you remove a plumber's putty stain on granite?

**A.** A plumber's putty stain is an oil stain, due to the oil base of the putty, and removal is usually successful. Prepare a poultice, but do not hydrate the poultice powder with water – use a solvent instead, like acetone or mineral spirits. We always try to pull a stain out backwards on the path which it entered the stone, as opposed to trying to pull a stain all the way through the stone. To do this, you need to apply the poultice to the area of the stone where the stain entered. This usually involves removing a plumbing fixture, which needs to be done to remove the putty anyway. One application will not likely clear the stain, but you should notice improvement. Repeat, sometimes as many as five applications, until the stain has been eradicated. Several years ago, this was perhaps the most common question that we were asked, although it

has become less common recently. I believe the reduction is a result of the stone installers doing a better job of educating (some even adhering warning labels to installed countertops), and the plumbing trade gaining experience so that many now understand the incompatibility between the two products. Some manufacturers of plumber's putty have started printing this caution on the container label.

**Q.** Is it possible to get 18'-0" long pieces of stone? We are designing a fountain feature, and we are looking for long, uninterrupted stone pieces for the waterfall section.

**A.** All quarries are limited to working with what nature gives them, and in many cases, this would mean that lengths of 18 feet are simply unachievable. Even if larger blocks are available, the quarrier will typically pre-drill the stone mass in a modular pattern to yield blocks of roughly 10'-6" x 5'-6" x 5'-6". This is a convenient size for transport and handling, and also closely maximizes the bay area in a typical shot saw, which is how the majority of blocks are slabbed. Your desire is an extremely customized piece, and would have to be coordinated directly with the quarry. It will require a quarry that can yield the size, a specially prepared area of the quarry to extract it, specialized handling and transport methods, and specialized sawing and finishing methods. It can, however, be made available from a number of sources. In industrial applications, like surface plates, precision beams, and press rolls, I've seen stone sections supplied in excess of 40 foot lengths!