MasterFormat™ Specifications ◄ ► 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. 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 is the exclusive property of MIA and shall not be disseminated, republished, or reproduced in any manner without the prior written consent of MIA.*

Q: In the Marble Institute of America's *Dimension Stone Design Manual*, it states that the minimum recommended bed and joint width is ¼" for exteriors and $^1/_8$" for interiors. I know what a joint is, but what is a "bed"?

A: The term "bed" simply means the horizontal mortar joint between courses.

Q: We have a countertop installation without a subtop that has a 48" long cabinet in an island, and the width of the cabinet is 40 inches. Chapter 17 of the *Dimension Stone Design Manual* states that we cannot span greater than 36 inches with unsupported 3 cm material. Do we have to add framework inside this cabinet unit to support the top?

A: The reference in the *Design Manual* is to completely unsupported spans, such as would occur if you had a desk area within the countertop where there is no cabinetry below. In the situation that you've described, the stone is still supported by the cabinet frame along its length at both the front and rear edges. While the stone is spanning more than 36 inches, it is a different situation than a simple span in which the stone is only supported at two edges. Full perimeter support of the stone in this case creates a different panel behavior, in that it would have to fail in two directions simultaneously to create a problem. There are some stones of limited stability that might require extra framing or even a structural underlayment in this case, but the overwhelming majority of stones in 30 mm thickness will span this cabinet without issue.

Q: The Marble Institute's Soundness Classification says that Class C stones are not allowed for exteriors, but I've seen several that have been used on exteriors. Have they been misclassified?

A: The soundness classifications simply describe the typical repairs and reinforcements that are done to a stone to make it useable in application. In general, the extent of these remedial procedures in a soundness classification "C" stone is significant enough to preclude its use in either exterior or wet interior exposures. But, as is always the case, ours is an industry of exceptions. There are indeed several stone varieties included in the "C" classification that have been used successfully in exterior applications. There may, however, be some extra measures required to be taken (increased thickness, reduced span, additional moisture protection, etc.) in order to use them effectively in some cases.

Q: I'm developing a specification for a commercial project with marble countertops. In what spec. section does the marble spec. belong?

A: I've seen stone countertops specified in several different sections, but the most correct placement would be in Section 12 Furnishings, which is where the cabinetry is normally specified as well. If you subscribe to MasterSpec®, you will note that their section for dimension stone countertops is 123640. Section 12 is one, like most, that hasn't moved with the expanded MasterFormat divisions. The expansion to 50 divisions (some reserved for future expansion) is mostly due to create specification sections for specifying new technologies that didn't exist when the traditional table of contents was created (See table).

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