
Proper Procedures for Cleaning Flat Glass Mirrors

Mirrors provide both functional and aesthetic performance in the interior design for today's homes, office buildings, schools, medical and institutional facilities. In addition to the function of providing reflected images, mirrors are being used to move natural light further into buildings and enhance the openness of rooms. Proper cleaning procedures must be followed to ensure the long-term performance of mirrors.

Care and Cleaning of Mirrors

Many people are unaware of how to properly care for and clean the mirrors in their homes and offices. Many cleaning products make claims to be the best for mirrors. The truth is the care and cleaning of mirrors is simple and inexpensive. Care should always be taken to avoid getting the edges of the mirror wet with any liquid or substance. This can result in damage to the mirror edges, commonly called "black edge". Should mirror edges become wet, they should be dried off immediately.

The following are recommendations from manufacturers of quality mirrors:

Do's:

- Do use clean, warm water with a soft, lint-free cloth to clean the mirror. Wring all water from the cloth before wiping the mirror. Dry the mirror immediately with a dry lint-free cloth.
- Do use 0000 oil-free steel wool, not solvents, to remove surface marks or stubborn dirt. Use of solvents can attack and damage the edges and backing of mirrors.
- Do use soft, lint and grit free cloths to clean a mirror. This reduces the chances of scratching the mirror surface.
- Do make sure all joints and edges are dry so that no liquid or cleaner comes into contact with the edges and backing.

Don'ts:

- Don't use acid or alkali cleaners for mirror cleanup after installation. Either substance can attack the front surface and edges as well as the backing of the mirror. No abrasive cleaners should ever be used on any mirror surface.
- Don't spray cleaners directly on the mirror. Always apply cleaner directly to a soft, lint-free cloth and then wipe the mirror. This will help prevent the cleaner from contacting the edges of the mirror and damaging them.
- Don't clean across the face of multiple mirrors at the same time. When cleaning several mirrors installed on a wall, wipe the joints in the same direction as the joints. This will keep the cleaner from collecting in the area where the mirrors join.
- Don't use commercial mirror cleaners that contain ammonia or vinegar.

Transparent Mirror Products

Transparent / two-way mirror products allow vision through one direction while giving the appearance of a standard mirror on the opposite side. These applications typically expose the coated surface to the mirrored room. With the exception of the 0000 oil-free steel wool procedures, the cleaning procedures provided above also apply to cleaning the coated glass surface. In addition, extreme care must be taken to ensure that no hard objects such as rings or metal surfaces of cleaning equipment contact the coated surface. Permanent damage to the coated surface may result from improper cleaning procedures.

Construction Site Conditions

Mirror products must be protected during construction site storage and installation. Mirrors should be stored in a dry, well-ventilated area, free of chemical fumes and away from high heat sources such as steam or water pipes. Exposure to excessive moisture or harmful construction materials can result in hard to remove surface conditions. Mirrors should be the last materials to be installed. Sprayed material such as wall texture or adhesives for wall covering should be completely cured before mirror installation. If conditions are found that mirrors cannot be cleaned using the above procedures, contact the mirror supplier for guidelines for construction debris removal.

Failure to properly clean mirrors can result in damage to the mirrored surface and deterioration of the optical quality of the mirror reflectance.

NGA Provides Additional Information

Members of the Mirror Division of the National Glass Association (NGA) encourage, homeowners, construction trades, general contractors, building owners and facility maintenance staff to be aware of proper cleaning procedures for mirrors and conditions that can adversely affect long-term performance.

Visit www.glass.org/store for a complete list of Glass Technical Papers, as well as other glass building products and glazing industry reference materials.

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This Paper was developed by dedicated member volunteers and subject matter experts. The original version of this document was approved and published in 2005. This version of the document was updated and published in February 2024.