HOMEOWNER REPAIR GUIDE

HOW COLD IS TOO COLD?

Temperature requirements for late-season repairs

If you still have unfinished repairs late in the fall, be aware of the temperature requirements for the materials you are using.

> **THE 50° RULE**
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> As a rule, most products for exterior repairs need a minimum of 50° to cure properly.

MATERIALS THAT NEED WARM WEATHER

MATERIAL	TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS
Concrete	Concrete needs a month to cure, while the water evaporates from within it. Once we have snow and freezing weather, that curing doesn't occur at the proper rate, and the new concrete can crack and crumble. For that reason, try not to pour concrete less than 30 days before the first anticipated freeze. You should also pour concrete only on a day when the temperature is above 40°; if the overnight temperature will drop below 40°, cover the concrete with plastic and hay or straw to retain the heat created by the curing process. The addition of calcium chloride (a chemical sometimes used by contractors when they do cold weather pours) is not permitted under the Building Code of many communities, because it shortens the life of the concrete.
Asphalt driveway sealer	Asphalt driveway sealer needs 24 to 48 hours to dry. If the temperature goes below 50° (even at night), then the sealer won't cure properly. Crack filler should be used a few days before the sealer is applied, so that the filler can cure properly. It’s important to have two or three days of dry weather after applying the sealer or filler, so the rain doesn’t wash away these materials.
Paint	Unless you use one of the new paints designed for use down to 35°, you shouldn’t paint when the temperature is expected to drop below 50° that night. Regular paint needs some warmth to dry, so it can cure and adhere the way it's supposed to.

MATERIAL	TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS
Roofing	If you're looking to replace your roof, wait until spring if at all possible. If you re-roof late in the year, the materials may not last as long as they should. The roofing materials may not lay down properly, causing “bubbles” when the temperature warms up again. Roll roofing and shingles will become very brittle under 50° and can develop hairline cracks as they are handled. These cracks will cause the materials to fail much sooner than they would otherwise. If you must patch in cold weather, keep the materials inside where they can stay warm until you are ready to nail them in place.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE 50° RULE

MATERIAL	WHY IT WORKS IN COOLER WEATHER
Caulk	Doesn't require as high a temperature to cure to provide an effective seal.
Glazing compound	Another product that can be used at a lower temperature.
Tuckpointing and masonry	Mortar will cure below 50° (but not at freezing temperatures).

THINK BEYOND ONE SUNNY AFTERNOON

Remember—you're paying good money for these jobs. It may be tempting to take advantage of an Indian Summer day to finish up those repairs you'd planned to do, but you need to think beyond one sunny afternoon. For products that need a higher temperature to cure, using them when it's too cold may make your repair shorter-lived, at best, and ineffective at worst. Make sure you have enough warm weather ahead for the materials to cure as they're meant to do, and they'll give you the life span you've paid for.

Home Repair Resource center

Home Repair Resource Center empowers homeowners to maintain their homes for sustainable and diverse communities.

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