

Concrete

How to minimise chances of early cracking

Concreting
TIP!

Most concrete shrinks while it sets, cures and gains strength.

This is because water in the mix rises to the surface and evaporates – therefore the concrete is losing volume. As the concrete has not yet gained any strength, this shrinkage can cause unsightly cracking. **Slabs, driveways and footpaths are vulnerable as these have large exposed surfaces.**

When concreting in **dry, hot weather, when it is windy or the humidity is low**, it is important to prevent early loss of water from the concrete. Hot days, wind and low humidity in combination or separately can cause these cracks and reduce your working time.

In these conditions, it is important to take precautions when handling, placing, compacting, finishing and curing concrete. This is very important during the spring and summer months, but it can happen at any time of year.

- **1 Check the forecast**
Avoid concreting in conditions with **extreme evaporation** rates. You can check local conditions at the **Bureau of Meteorology bom.gov.au**
- **2 Prepare the ground**
Thoroughly dampen the area where you are placing concrete or **use plastic sheeting** to prevent loss of water.
- **3 Place it quickly**
Ensure adequate **labour and equipment is available** to place the concrete as soon as possible.
- **4 Vibrate it**
Vibrating is essential for **compacting the concrete**, expelling unwanted air and preventing other forms of cracking.
- **5 Protect it**
Frequent applications of an evaporation retarder such as **aliphatic alcohol (below)** during placement and during the finishing process will help prevent water evaporating from the surface. **Prompt application of curing compound** is also very important.
- **6 Cut it**
Plan **adequate joints and cut joints** as soon as possible.
- **7 Shelter it**
Provide **shade and windbreaks** to protect the concrete from extremes in weather, particularly after finishing. **Damp hessian** is great for protecting fresh concrete from the sun. **Builder's film** and **wooden stakes** make for an economical wind-break.

Talk to us!
We're here to help!

Concrete
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