



Gary Porter, Engineering & Technical Services for the Masonry Advisory Council is called upon with questions about construction concerns and for masonry advice from a variety of Architects, Engineers, Contractors, Developers and Distributor sources. He is dedicated to ongoing education of masonry and shares helpful tips from his professional experience that may be beneficial to you.

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## Brick... Paint or Don't Paint?

THAT IS the question that many home owners or business owners are considering today. My Dad, the mason contractor, always said "You don't paint brick!" Contrary to that word of wisdom, my wife & I agreed that the old brick on the fireplace of our renovated home needed some updating. So I painted it! My Dad is probably not so happy with me and I feel like he will tell me about this someday.

I must say that esthetically the fireplace looks brighter, cleaner and blends together well with our paint finishes. This painting happened on an interior surface that will never be exposed to the elements. The elements, especially in Chicago can be unfriendly to a painted brick.

What does the masonry industry and specifically The Brick Industry Association say about painting brick? For this answer we go to the Brick Industry Association (BIA) website, [www.gobrick.com](http://www.gobrick.com) and search for Technical Note #6 – Painting Brick Masonry.

Brick is usually selected for its' color or finish. The color is typically throughout the clay unit. Brick is painted to usually increase light reflection and for decorative purposes. If you choose to paint brick, it will most likely have to be repainted every three to five years, per the manufacturers of paint. I feel that this repainting time may be longer on a home, as a home typically has overhangs and possibly not as much exposure to rain and the elements as a commercial building would allow.



There is an alternative to painting brick. This alternative is staining the brick. Staining is a process that penetrates the surface pore structure of the brick or masonry making a bond with the unit. Paint is a surface coating that mask the texture not making the chemical bond with the unit. In painting since there is no good bond with the unit, water can come into the air space between, allowing water to freeze and pop paint off the surface.

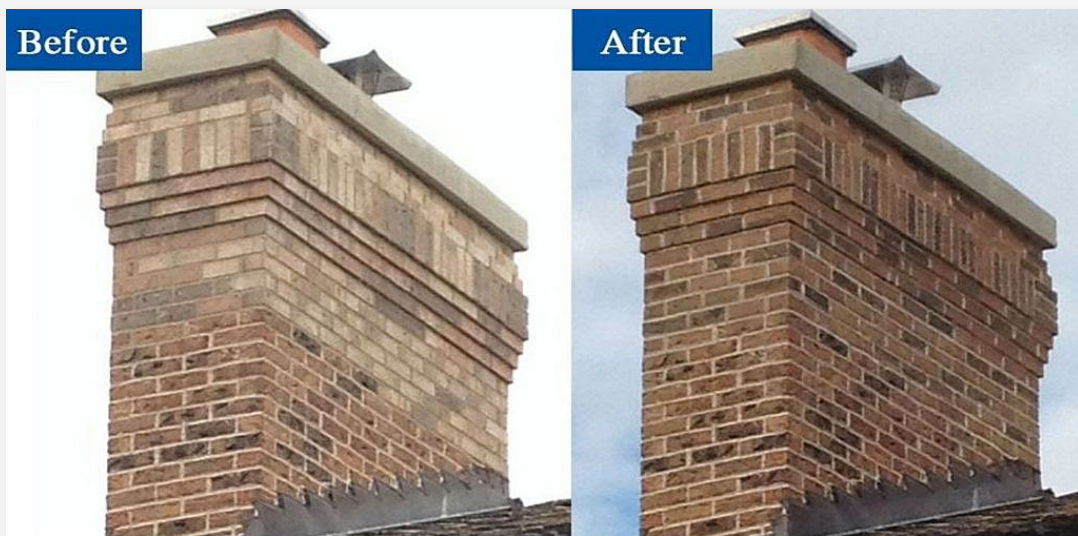
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Staining brick will not flake or fade in color from UV radiation. The companies that stain brick include a warranty against fading and peeling for at least 25 years.

Other benefits of staining are:

- Unlimited range of colors
- Ideal for blending new additions
- Zero-maintenance color solution
- Natural looking color
- 25-Year Warranty on product and labor

The point made of “ideal for blending new additions”, staining is used many times when an addition to an existing structure or a patch is made and through the staining process we achieve a very good match that makes the entire new and old structure look like it has always been this way. This can save a lot of material and labor as opposed to stripping all the brick off and relaying it.



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Visit our website [masonryadvisorycouncil.org](http://masonryadvisorycouncil.org)

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