

ABRASIVE BLASTING - EXPOSING THE AGGREGATE

Abrasive blasting can be used to texture the surface of hardened concrete to provide an exposed aggregate surface. The blasting wears away the paste as well as fine aggregate to produce an exposed aggregate finish. An exposed aggregate finish is used where the beauty of the aggregate or a textured surface is to be featured.

There are several types of blasting media available that can be used to achieve unique looks. Some common examples of blasting media include coal slag, garnet, glass, sand, and aluminum oxide. Because each material performs differently, working with someone who understands the different blasting media and blasting techniques is vital to producing the desired effect. Ask for a sample panel prior to specifying so that you know exactly what each blasting media can do.

Other factors to consider when deciding which blasting media to use is the amount of time involved, the quality of the material and company you use, and the expense and availability of the blasting media. Of the media listed above, sand is initially the most cost-effective material. But in recent years, silica dispersed from sand has been linked to health risks and its use is heavily regulated and, in some cases, even banned across the nation.

It is important to consider the pros and cons of each blasting media type. Certain media will save you more time while another might reduce the amount of dust while blasting. Another media may give you a cleaner look while the next may offer lower maintenance. Certain media may cost less while yet another provides a better quality of finish.

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The Wells Federal Bank in Mankato, MN provides an example of how exposed aggregate can work with other precast concrete finishes to provide a unique, classic look. (Image Credit: Wells Concrete)