

Sealers, Stains & Topcoats

Sealers

“What product should I use to seal my log home?” is a question often put to us by prospective customers. Why do so many people refer to “sealing” a log home rather than staining or finishing? Few people talk about sealing siding or trim on a stick built home. They are either stained or painted, yet sealing is the term used by many log home owners. As it relates to log homes, the term “sealing” dates back to the early 1900s. Prior to then, most log homes were constructed using heartwood from old growth timber and left bare. Heartwood is resistant to insect and decay infestations, and log home builders knew to include porches or not to leave log ends sticking out beyond the roof line. This was the best thing for them to do when the logs were bare, to keep them dry. That is why so many of them survive to this day.

In the mid to late 1900s old growth timber was no longer readily available and people started constructing log homes using second or third growth timber that was mostly sapwood. They also stopped using many of the good construction practices of their ancestors, so problems with bugs and decay began to arise. At around the same time the petroleum industry began to develop, with the availability of oil and tar products at reasonable prices. Log home owners soon discovered that smearing some of these oil derivatives over their homes helped eliminate some of their insect and decay problems. In their minds they “sealed” the logs, and the term is still used to this day. Up to the 1950s, unless the logs were painted, log homes came in two basic colors, black and gray.

So, are any of our LIFELINE exterior finishes sealers? As the term relates to keeping liquid water from entering the wood, they all are. Our LIFELINE stains as well as Prelude Clear Primer and Advance Topcoat are all barriers to keep the underlying wood dry.

Stains

There is a misconception that our pigmented finishes alone do not act as water repellents and it is the Advance Topcoat that seals the surface. That is why many people call our Advance Topcoat a sealer but that is not an accurate description of the product. All of our stains are excellent water repellents. They may not bead water, but they provide a polymer-film barrier that prevents liquid water from penetrating into the wood.

Calling our LIFELINE finishes “stains” can also be a bit confusing. The term itself, to some, implies that the wood fibers are “stained” with the colorants contained in the products. However, in the case of film forming water-based finishes, the wood fibers are not impregnated with the colorants as with penetrating oil stains. If wood is painted with a latex paint no one expects the paint

to impregnate the underlying wood. So, if you believe that your wood is not “taking” our LIFELINE stain, it is important to understand that our finishes behave more like latex paints than penetrating oil stains.

Topcoats

One of the most frequently asked questions we receive about our Advance Topcoats is why not include the topcoat in with the stain. The answer to this question is that if we did, it would no longer be a topcoat. Topcoats play a specific role in protecting any finish system. Returning to car finishes for example. The primer and pigmented paint protects the metal from corrosion and provides the color. The car's clear topcoat is designed to protect the color coat from abrasion, dirt and sunlight. The only thing it has to adhere to is the color coat. Our Advance Topcoats play essentially the same role, to protect the color coats from the weather, sunlight and dirt. Although our stains have to be able to adhere to bare wood, it is not necessary for Advance to adhere to bare wood. As it is stated on the label, to be applied only over an existing finish. Although most topcoats on the market are unpigmented versions of their stains, Advance is specifically formulated as a high performing topcoat. One with a unique set of characteristics that have yet to be duplicated by anyone else in our industry. One of the reasons LIFELINE Advance out performs all other topcoats is that is formulated for a very specific purpose and should never be applied to bare wood.