

Advisory Bulletin



BUILDING VALUE SINCE 1906

TB-108 Slip-Resistant Grab Bar Surface

Conclusion:

The standard satin-finish on all Bobrick grab bar series is a slip-resistant surface that provides superior grip performance compared to peened-finish grab bars. Because peened-finish grab bars, often selected for “wet areas”, are at an approximately 20% price premium to satin-finish grab bars the peened-finish grab bars result in reduced value to the building owner.

History:

Prior to the 1960’s, grab bars were manufactured of high-polished, chrome-plated, 18-gauge thick brass tubing. These grab bars were installed in “wet areas” of healthcare facilities where patients’ hands were wet and they were seeking a grab bar for support. “Wet areas” included in showers, around bathtubs and in patient bathrooms adjacent to lavatories and toilets. Because the high-polished, chrome-plated grab bar surface did not provide slip-resistance, grab bar manufacturers added texture to the grab bars including “peened” and “knurled” surfaces. Slip-resistant surface grab bars reduce risks of slips, falls and injuries to enhance patient safety. They also reduce liability risks for building owners. These slip-resistant surface descriptions were included in U.S. specifications, and written into building codes throughout Canada.

Beginning in the mid-1960s, the grab bar industry replaced 18-gauge brass tubing with 18-gauge stainless steel tubing. The “peened-finish” textured surface continued to be offered as an alternative to the standard satin-finish grab bar surface.

In 2015 the Canadian National Building Code (NBC) changed the grab bar surface requirement reference to “a slip-resistant” surface. Provincial building codes have adopted the 2015 NBC surface requirement language. Unfortunately, out of habit, architects and specifiers continue to specify grab bars with “peened” or “knurled” surface finish.

Grip Performance Tests:

Bobrick conducted slip-resistance testing of satin-finish and peened-finish grab bar surfaces with both wet and dry hands. The results of the ASTM F2961 Grip Performance Test indicate the slip-resistance of a satin-finish grab bar surface provides similar traction to a peened-finish grab bar surface when grabbed by a dry hand. When grabbed with a wet hand, the surface of the satin-finish grab bar was found to provide 10% more traction than the surface of the peened finish grab bar. A copy of Bureau Veritas Consumer Product Services, Inc.’s., Buffalo, NY, Report Number (5118) 248, September 25, 2018 is available on request.

Third-party testing results provide that 9806.MBLK grab bars have a slip resistance within 10% of 6806.99 peened grab bars for both wet and dry hands. A copy of Bureau Veritas Consumer Product Services, Inc.’s., Buffalo, NY, Report Number (5123) 263-0014, October 13, 2023, is available on request.

Review Specification Language for Slip-Resistant Grab Bars:

Add “satin-finish, slip-resistant surface”, and Remove “peened- and knurled-finish” language from grab bar specifications.