Bill Longo *is Henkel's go-to guy for caulks, sealants, and adhesives. Having helped him program his cell phone, his teenage children will be impressed he knows a thing or two about advancements in technology.*

Ask Billy

New technology makes choosing foam over fiberglass an easy decision

Dear Billy,

I've been in the window installation business for many years and have seen the use of polyurethane foam come and go several times. I tried the foam and liked it. However, I found that the window manufacturers would void the window warranty if I used it. I then return to the old standby, fiberglass insulation, to seal the gaps around windows. It now appears that there is a new resurgence in the use of polyurethane foams for installing windows. What gives, Bill?

Signed: Befuddled About Foam

Dear Befuddled,

You are correct that there has been an on-again, off-again relationship in the window industry with polyurethane foam. The best way to explain the fickle relationship is three words: Advancements in technology.

When first introduced to the window installation industry back in the early 1970s, the technology was high-expanding polyurethane foam. After an epidemic of inoperable installed windows, the industry surmised that high-expansion foam was the cause and the window manufacturers took their stance against foam use. Installers went back to chinking in fiberglass insulation around the windows.

With the conventional thinking that high-expansion foam bowed the windows, it was only logical that low-expansion foam was then developed. Once again, the problem occurred. Everyone went back to fiberglass insulation.

Today, we now know and have adequate test data to prove that it was the pressure that built up within the foam for curing – not the expansion – that caused the bowing. The polyurethane foam that is acceptable for use around windows is low-pressure and low-expansion closed-cell foam, products such as Henkel's own TeQ::Foam™ Window and Door Foam, from the OSI® WINTeQ™ Window Installation System. Finally, the industry has polyurethane foam it can count on. Windows are not bowing or warping, and window manufacturers are not voiding warranties for installers who use it.

History lesson over. Let's discuss its benefits. Besides ease of use, another reason to use polyurethane foam is that it seals out water and air. In fact, polyurethane foam has an R-value of approximately 5 for a 1" bead, increasing the overall energy efficiency of the installed window. On the other hand, fiberglass insulation does not seal out air and moisture, and actually will retain moisture if water gets into the opening, creating an environment for mold and mildew to grow. Think back to the last replacement window job you did. What color was the fiberglass insulation around the window? I bet it was black. The insulation turned black because it was filtering air in and out of the house for the past 15-plus years.

So, Befuddled, use polyurethane foam with confidence and share its benefits with your customers. They, like you, have another reason to thank technology for improving the way we live and work.

Stickin' with you on the job,

Billy

Got a question for Billy?
E-mail him at Bill.Longo@us.henkel.com.