

The Hard Truth

ABOUT CONCRETE CRACKS & CONTROL JOINTS



Contrary to popular belief, concrete cracks, and usually not too long after its poured. So one of the most important components of a concrete project is understanding how, when and where to put control joints.

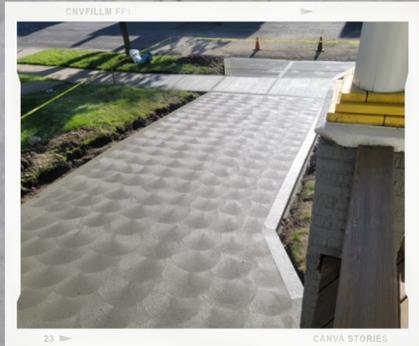
WHAT ARE CONTROL JOINTS ANYWAY?

Simply put, control joints are planned cracks which are usually caused by temperature changes and shrinkage from drying. When the concrete cracks, control joints allow you to help plan where the cracks will be and maximize the possibility of straight cracks rather than random, stray cracks.



WHEN SHOULD CONTROL JOINTS BE CUT?

When to cut control joints is determined by the type of concrete used (6.5 sack v. MS-800), weather and length of time the concrete has had to "set up". If it is hot outside, often times cuts will need to happen within 12 hours. If hand cuts, (using a joint tool), are used - they are cut immediately and will "set up" with the concrete. Joints are typically cut at 25% of the depth of the slab (a 4 inch slab will have a 1 inch deep control joint).



WHERE DO THE CONTROL JOINTS GO? HOW WILL THEY LOOK?

There is a definite science to the spacing of concrete control joints. A good rule of thumb is that spacing (in feet) is no more than 2-3 times the slab thickness (in inches) - a 4 inch slab would have joints no more than 8-12 feet in spacing. Less spacing is even better when possible.

A hand cut (tool cut) joint will have a deeper and wider joint look. A saw cut will be a narrow, thin cut. The type of joint that is cut is often determined by the type of concrete and size of the slab that is being poured. When possible we will match the same cut style as any surrounding concrete.

Aesthetically speaking, we aim for a clean look that excentuates the design of the concrete finish. Sometimes, especially with stamped concrete (depending on the stamp pattern) we may have to place a cut that is made for the structural integrity of the concrete in place of aesthetics.

