

STERLING MODELS

Silicone Sidewalks Mold

This silicone rubber mold produces HO Scale sidewalks that are 5 feet wide with a 6 inch curb and are representative of sidewalks that were in use before the handicap accessible laws were established.

The tread surface is textured with the curb being smooth giving it the appearance of having being cast in a concrete form.

Each cast will produce the following parts (both with and without curbs).

Strip of six 5x5 foot square sections

5x5 foot section

5x8 foot section

5x10 foot section

It also includes both left and right curved ends with curb. Each of these is a strip of two 5x5 foot sections.

For ease of casting and handling, the castings dress out to .200 inch and are intended to butt up against a pre-installed road that is approximately 1/8" thick.

Prototype sidewalks normally range between 6" and 8" in height. With an HO Scale inch equaling .0115 a scale 6" would be .069 inch.

A 1/8" thick road (which would be .125) butted up against the sidewalks (which are .200) results in a sidewalk that is .075 or 6 1/2 scale inches high.

Casting

Casting the sidewalks using harder, denser plasters such as Hydrocal or Ultra-cal 30 produces better castings. We have had good results using Ultra-cal 30 as it has a long working time, reproduces detail well and results in castings that are a light gray making them easier to color.

Mold release is unnecessary using plaster in any type of rubber mold. However mold dressing is highly recommended as pouring plaster into dry molds results in serious issues with air bubbles. Mold dressing reduces surface tension with water and is glycol based rather than soap based. Using a soap based wetting agent in water generates excessive bubbles whereas glycol does not. A glycol based wetting agent like Super Wet, a product sold by Scenic Express, is highly recommended.

Preparing Castings

To use the castings they will need to have a flat back and be of a uniform thickness. Attaching a sheet of #80 sandpaper to a flat surface with double sided tape or spray adhesive will create a sanding surface that the casting can be rubbed over using a circular motion—testing it to a previously sanded casting until they match up in thickness. When the flash on the edge of the casting comes off by itself the casting will be approximately .200 in thickness—which will leave .075 when butted against a 1/8" thick road.

Plaster beads will sometimes form in the grooves between sidewalk sections and between sections and curb. These should be removed with a needle in a pin vise or a similarly pointed tool to remove both the bead and a root that tends to form with it. Then the grooves can then be cleaned up with a scribe. If no groove appears when joining castings together putting a very slight bevel on the edge of the sidewalk will create a starting line between the castings which can then be trued up to the size of the existing grooves with a scribe.

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Castings can be trimmed with an Exacto saw and trued up with a sanding jig such as a Northwest Shortline true sander. Sanding blocks can be created by using square strips of basswood with sandpaper attached with double sided tape. These can be used to true up ends or adjust the length of strips so sidewalk grooves will match up when needed.

Coloring Sidewalks

After installing, sealing the plaster will give greater control over the coloring of the sidewalks. Matte medium diluted 4 to 1 with distilled water makes an excellent sealer (4 parts distilled water to 1 part matte medium). The first coat will dry almost immediately as the plaster will absorb the water out of the sealer. Do not keep applying as this will create an excessive build up of acrylic. Apply the first coat evenly and allow it to dry. A second coat should sufficiently seal the sidewalks. Too little sealer will result in uneven and spotty staining with colored washes. Over sealing will result in loss of sidewalk surface texture and difficulty in staining. Coloring can now be done with diluted washes of acrylics, inks, chalks or a combination thereof. Sidewalk joints can be highlighted with black wash before using any chalks.