

# 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 Test:**

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.

### **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.