How colder weather affects synthetic turf installs and repairs

Editor's note: *We asked some experts these questions: Is there a temperature threshold below which it is considered "too cold" to install or repair synthetic turf? How can cold weather affect installation time lines? What exactly is affected—building the base, for example, or using the adhesive? Is sewing seams recommended in cold weather vs. using adhesives? Is sewing that much of a slower process?*

Wisdom from The Guru of Glue

THE SYNTHETIC TURF BUSINESS has expanded to a point where there is not enough time to limit installations to just warm-mild weather. More time is needed which translates into installations and repairs in the cool and/or cold weather of early spring, late fall and throughout the winter. However, there is some cold weather factors that should be kept in mind regardless of the methods and/or products used.

Almost everything slows down when it gets cold. Rain water evaporates slower in Winter than in the Summer; automobile batteries get weaker, their oil gets thicker and they perform better after they "warm up"; chemical reactions, such as adhesive curing, either slows down or stops, depending on the adhesive; turf get stiffer and harder to handle; sewing get tougher, etc.

While the laws of physics regarding cold vs. hot can't be changed there are some products and methods that can not be used when cold; others that are extremely slow and difficult; and others which although slower are useful for cold weather installations and/or repairs.

REGARDING ADHESIVES: There are some that freeze, crystallize or otherwise solidify in their container when cold. Hot melts adhesives are designed to go from solid to liquid when heated but they often prematurely re-solidify when applied to a cold sub-surface; paste adhesive become almost impossible to spread when cold; others do not cure when the temperature falls below otherwise workable temperatures. However, there also is a group of one-part urethane adhesives in which the manufacturer says can be used at any low temperature in which the installer can work.

REGARDING SEWING: Sewing machines become sluggish, plus the turf and sewing thread gets stiffer, which makes sewing much more difficult.

REGARDING INSTALLATION AND REPAIR: They proceed slower when cold than when hot because, installers can not work as efficiently; cold is also often accompanied by wind; the turf gets stiffer and harder to handle plus the options for sewing and/or adhesives selection are greatly reduced.

Cold weather installations and repairs are slower than when warm, but in cold weather it's much better and more profitable to work than the alternative of not starting or stopping an installation while waiting until it gets warm. However, investigate first and then be selective on the products and methods to use in cold weather. ■

Norris Legue, aka The Guru of Glue®, is president of Synthetic Surfaces Inc.

Below: Adhesive being sprayed to bond number inserts during a cold weather turf installation. **Right:** Adhesive coated seaming tape for bonding a loose-laid seam.