

Forms for Concrete

Concrete is a plastic material and before hardening, takes the form of anything against which or in which it is placed.

Naturally, the building of the Form is a most important item in the success of the work.

These Forms hold the concrete in place, support it until it has hardened and give it its shape, as well as its original surface finish.

Kinds of Forms

Almost any material which will hold the concrete in place will do for a Form. Concrete foundations for farm buildings require shallow trenches, and usually the earth walls are firm enough to act as a Form.

Moulds of wet sand are used for ornamental work. Frequently colored sands are used for this purpose, providing both the finished surface and color to the concrete ornament.

Cast, wrought or galvanized iron are used, where an extremely smooth finish is desired, without further treatment upon the removal of the Forms. Forms made of iron are more easily cleaned, and can be used a greater number of times than those of wood. Rusty iron, however, should not be used.

By far the greatest number of Forms are made of wood, owing to the fact that lumber in small quantities can always be obtained.

Requirements of a Good Form

Plan your Forms so there will be no difficult measurements to understand. Make as few pieces of lumber do the work as you can, and do not drive the Forms full of nails. If you do the Forms will be difficult to take apart without splitting.

Forms must be strong enough to hold the weight of the concrete without bulging out of shape. When they bulge, cracks open between the planks and the water in the concrete, with some cement and sand, will leak out. This weakens the concrete, and causes hollows in the surface which look badly after the Forms are removed.

Forms which lose their shape after being used once can hardly be used a second time. A part of the erection cost of Forms is saved if the Forms are built in as large a section as is convenient to handle. This saving applies to their removal, as well as their setting. Consequently, the lightest Forms possible, with the largest surface area, are the most economical.

How to Plan Forms

The first consideration in planning Forms is the use to which they are to be put. Neglect of this point means waste of money and time. If they are for work afterward to be covered with a veneer coat, the finish of the surface is of small consideration, while the alignment of the Form is all important.

If a tank or retaining wall is to be built, the fact that the Forms are not in exact alignment will hardly be noticed.