

Spalling Brick Repair: Why Your Brick Faces Are Flaking Off

What Causes It, Which Bricks Can Be Saved, and How to Stop
It Spreading

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Chapter 1: Spalling Brick Repair Starts With Understanding the Enemy

Walk up to any aging brick wall in Texas and run your hand across it. Most bricks feel solid, smooth, intact. Then your hand hits one that doesn't — the face is flaking off in layers, like a sunburn peeling, exposing rough crumbly material underneath. Or the face has popped off entirely, leaving a pitted hollow where a smooth brick used to be. That's spalling. And if you're seeing it on your walls, you need to understand it before you spend a dollar, because spalling is the one brick problem that never fixes itself and never stops on its own.

I've been doing this fifty years, and spalling is the most misunderstood deterioration in residential masonry. Homeowners mistake it for a cosmetic issue — "the brick looks a little rough" — and put it off. Contractors mistake it for a mortar issue and repoint over it. Neither is right. Spalling is the brick itself failing. The face of the brick — the hard-fired outer shell that makes a brick weatherproof — is breaking away from the body behind it. And once that face is

gone, the softer interior is exposed to water, and water is what caused the problem in the first place. It's a cycle, and it accelerates.

This book covers spalling brick repair the way it actually works: what spalling is and what causes it, which bricks can be saved and which have to come out, what replacement really costs in 2026, and — most importantly — how to stop it from spreading across your wall. Because here's the truth that matters: replacing spalled bricks without fixing the cause is like bailing a boat without plugging the hole. The new bricks will spall too. The fix has two halves — the bricks, and the water — and this book gives you both.

Chapter 2: The 2026 Numbers — What Spalling Brick Repair Costs

Let's get the money on the table first, because spalling repair is priced differently than mortar work and homeowners routinely get surprised.

The ranges. Current national cost data puts spalling brick repair at \$1,000 to \$3,500 for up to 100 square feet of wall, with small-section minimums of \$250 to \$450. Per square foot, replacing damaged brick units — cutting out spalled bricks and setting new ones — runs \$11 to \$24 per square foot for brick veneer work, and \$20 to \$40 per square foot for solid face-brick replacement. Repointing alone, where only the mortar needs work, is \$3 to \$20 per square foot — but repointing doesn't fix spalling, so don't let anybody sell you a repoint as a spall repair.

What moves the number: The extent of the damage is the big one — ten spalled bricks on a garden wall is a minimum-charge job; two hundred across a chimney and two elevations is a project. Height and access matter — second-story spall replacement needs scaffolding, which adds cost

the way it does on every masonry job. Brick matching matters enormously — standard modern brick is one price; discontinued, historic, or unusual brick that has to be sourced reclaimed is another. And the cause has to be addressed — if the spalling came from a failed flashing, a bad cap, or water intrusion, fixing the source is part of the scope, not an extra.

The "depends on" that surprises people: Spalling almost never travels alone. When a mason opens up a spalled area, he usually finds that the damage goes deeper than the surface showed — more bricks affected behind the face course, mortar compromised by the same water that spalled the brick. Honest bids include a contingency conversation: "Here's the price for what we can see; if we find more going in, here's how it adjusts." Get that in writing before the work starts.

The cost of waiting: This is the number nobody quotes you. A spalled brick left alone doesn't stabilize — the exposed interior absorbs more water than the faced brick ever did, the next freeze (or the next hard rain cycle) takes more material, and the damage spreads to neighboring bricks as water migrates through the wall. A \$400 repair this year is a

\$1,500 repair in three years. Spalling is one of the few masonry problems where delay has a direct, predictable price.

Chapter 3: Cause Number One — Water and the Freeze

The primary cause of spalling, the one behind most of what I see in Texas, is water getting into the brick and then expanding. In cold climates it's freeze-thaw: water saturates the brick, freezes, expands by about nine percent, and the hydraulic pressure blows the face off. In Texas, we get fewer hard freezes, but we get something just as destructive: saturation cycling. Brick absorbs water, the Texas sun bakes it out, it absorbs again — and every cycle works the face a little looser. Add our occasional hard freezes — the North Texas ice events — and saturated brick faces pop like popcorn.

Here's the mechanism, because understanding it changes how you look at your walls. A brick is not uniform. The firing process creates a hard, dense outer shell — the face — over a softer, more porous interior body. That face is the brick's raincoat. As long as it's intact, water mostly stays out. But water finds every weakness: a hairline crack in the face, a porous spot from under-firing, a joint where the mortar has

failed and water wicks sideways into the brick. Once water gets behind the face — between the shell and the body — it has nowhere to go. It sits there. And when it freezes, or when repeated saturation builds enough pressure, the face delaminates. It flakes. It pops.

Where it hits first: Anywhere water concentrates. Below sills where water sheets off. At the base of walls where splash-back keeps the bottom courses wet. On chimneys — the most exposed masonry on the house, taking rain from every direction. Around failed flashing, where water that should be channeled away pours into the wall instead. Parapets and garden walls, exposed on both sides. If you're seeing spalling in a pattern — a horizontal band, a cluster under a window, the top ten courses of a chimney — the pattern is pointing at the water source. Follow it.

The Texas version: Our spalling is less about deep freeze and more about water management failure plus thermal shock. Sprinklers soaking a wall daily. A cap or coping that's failed and lets water pour down the core. Flashing that's been caulked shut instead of left to drain. The water gets in, the sun superheats the wet brick, steam pressure builds behind the face — same result as a freeze, different season. Texas

spalls brick just fine without much help from winter.

Chapter 4: Cause Number Two — The Wrong Mortar

The second great cause of spalling, and the most infuriating because it's man-made, is repointing with mortar that's harder than the brick.

The rule of masonry — the one the Brick Industry Association's technical guidance is built on — is simple: the mortar must always be softer than the brick. Mortar is the sacrificial element. When the wall moves, when temperature swings, when moisture cycles — the mortar gives, the brick survives. That's the design. It's been the design for centuries.

Now here's what happens when somebody repoints old, soft brick with hard modern mortar — typically a Portland-heavy Type S where a soft Type N or lime mortar belonged. The hard mortar doesn't give. So when the wall moves, the stress has to go somewhere, and it goes into the brick faces. The mortar holds; the brick face pops off. I see this constantly on older Texas homes — beautiful 1920s and 30s brick, repointed sometime in the 80s or 90s with hard mortar by somebody who thought "stronger is better," and now the

faces are spalling off in sheets. The repointing didn't fail. It succeeded — at destroying the brick.

How to tell if this is your problem: Look at the relationship between the mortar and the brick. If the mortar joints look great — hard, intact, barely weathered — but the brick faces around them are flaking and popping, that's the signature. Good mortar, dying brick. The mortar is winning a fight it was supposed to lose. Also check the history: if the house was repointed in the last twenty years and the spalling started after, the timeline testifies.

The fix is not more mortar. You can't repoint your way out of this one. The hard mortar has to come out — carefully, because grinding hard mortar out of soft brick without damaging the brick further is delicate work — and the right softer mortar has to go in. And the spalled bricks themselves usually need replacement, because a brick that's lost its face to hard mortar won't heal. This is why the wrong repoint is the most expensive kind: you pay for the repoint, then you pay to undo it, then you pay to do it right.

I covered mortar types in depth in my tuckpointing book — which mortar belongs where, and why. The short version for this book: if your brick is old, soft, or historic, and anybody

proposes anything harder than Type N, stop the conversation.

The mortar must be the weak link. Always.

Chapter 5: Cause Number Three — Trapped Moisture

Brick needs to breathe. It's a porous material — it absorbs water, and it has to be able to release it. Anything that traps moisture inside the brick accelerates spalling, sometimes dramatically.

Paint. The classic trap. Somebody paints a brick wall — for the look, or to cover staining — with a non-breathable paint. Water still gets into the brick from behind, from below, through cracks — water always finds a way in. But now it can't get out through the face, because the paint seals it. Moisture builds up behind the paint film, and the pressure blows off paint and brick face together. I take paint off spalling walls and find the worst damage exactly where the paint was thickest. If your brick is painted and spalling, the paint is suspect number one. (Breathable mineral paints exist and are a different story — but standard latex or oil over brick is a moisture trap.)

Non-breathable sealers. Same mechanism, less visible. A sealer that's supposed to "waterproof" the brick but doesn't

let vapor through traps moisture the same way paint does. The wall looks fine — until the faces start popping behind the sealer. This is why the sealer conversation in Chapter 12 has exactly one non-negotiable word: breathable.

Sandblasting. Aggressive cleaning — sandblasting, or pressure washing at destructive pressure — strips the hard-fired face right off the brick. The wall looks clean and bright, and the owner is happy, right up until the first wet season. Because now every brick on that wall is exposed interior — no raincoat. They absorb water like sponges, and they spall like crazy. Sandblasting brick is considered poor practice in restoration for exactly this reason. If your wall was blasted and now it's spalling, the blasting did it.

Caulked-shut drainage. Brick veneer walls are designed to drain — weep holes at the base, flashing that channels water out. When somebody caulks the weep holes shut ("to keep bugs out") or seals flashing joints that were meant to stay open, water that gets into the cavity can't get out. It sits against the back of the brick, saturating it from behind. The faces spall from the inside out. I find this on a depressing number of Texas homes — well-meaning maintenance that sealed the wall's drainage and doomed its brick.

Chapter 6: Cause Number Four — Salts

The fourth cause is chemical, and it announces itself in white.

Efflorescence — the white crystalline staining you see on brick walls — is soluble salts being carried to the surface by water and deposited as the water evaporates. A little efflorescence is cosmetic. But when salts crystallize inside the brick rather than on the surface — a process called subflorescence — the growing crystals exert pressure inside the brick's pores. Enough pressure, repeated enough times, and the face spalls off from within.

Where the salts come from: The brick itself — some bricks carry more soluble salts from manufacturing. The mortar — Portland cement contains sulfates that can migrate. The soil — groundwater wicking up through the base of the wall carries dissolved salts. De-icing salts in northern climates; in Texas, it's usually the brick, the mortar, or soil moisture. Sulfate attack — sulfates reacting with the cement compounds in mortar — causes the mortar to expand, which cracks joints and can chip and spall the adjacent brick.

The signature: Spalling accompanied by heavy, recurring

white staining — not a light dusting that washes off, but thick crystalline buildup that keeps coming back. Spalling concentrated at the base of walls, where groundwater wicks up. Spalling on parapets and retaining walls — structures in constant contact with moisture and soil salts.

The fix: You can't change the salts in the brick, but you can cut off the water that mobilizes them. Stop the wicking — grade soil away from the base, fix the drainage, make sure water isn't ponding against the wall. The salts without water are inert. It's the water that weaponizes them.

Chapter 7: Triage — Which Bricks Can Be Saved and Which Have to Come Out

Not every damaged brick needs replacement. Here's how I triage a spalled wall.

Save it — monitor: Surface flaking that's shallow — the face is rough but largely intact, less than an eighth of an inch of material lost. The brick is otherwise sound — tap it and it rings solid. The cause has been identified and fixed — the water source is gone, the mortar is right. These bricks have lost some of their raincoat but not all of it. With the cause addressed and possibly a breathable sealer applied, they can serve for years. Monitor them — check annually, and if the flaking deepens, they move to the next category.

Replace it — the face is gone: The face has popped off entirely, exposing the soft interior. This brick has no weatherproofing left, and it will not regrow a face. It's now a water sponge embedded in your wall, feeding moisture to its neighbors. It comes out. There's no patch, no coating, no filler that restores a fired face. Anyone selling you a "brick face restorer" is selling paint.

Replace it — structural compromise: The brick is cracked through, crumbling in hand, or so deteriorated that it's lost significant mass. It's not just ugly — it's no longer doing its structural job in the wall. Out.

Replace it — the pattern demands it: Sometimes individual bricks look borderline, but they're in a zone where everything around them is being replaced. A mason replacing twenty bricks in a cluster will usually take the five borderline ones too, because the labor to come back later exceeds the cost of the brick now. This is judgment, and it's usually right.

The honest conversation: On a badly spalled wall, triage can feel like deciding which teeth to pull. A good mason walks the wall with you, marks the replacements — literally, with chalk — and explains the line between "save" and "replace" for your specific brick. If he marks everything for replacement without explaining why, get a second opinion. If he says "it's all fine, just repoint it" while faces are popping off in his hand, get a second opinion faster.

Chapter 8: The Replacement — What a Mason Actually Does

Replacing spalled bricks is surgical work. Here's the procedure, so you know what you're paying for and what "done right" looks like.

Cutting out. The mason cuts the mortar joints around the damaged brick — with a grinder, a mortar rake, or hand chisels on delicate work — and extracts the brick without damaging its neighbors. This is the skill step. A careless cutout chips the surrounding bricks, turning a one-brick replacement into a three-brick replacement. On soft or historic brick, it's hand tools only — power tools transmit too much shock.

Preparing the cavity. The opening gets cleaned — all loose mortar out, the cavity brushed and dampened. New mortar doesn't bond to dust, and dry old brick sucks the water out of fresh mortar before it cures, weakening the bond. Some masons butter the cavity; all good masons dampen it.

Setting the new brick. The replacement — matched as close as possible, Chapter 9 — goes in bedded in mortar matched to

the existing joints in type, strength, and color. It's tapped to line and level with its neighbors, the joints tooled to match the original profile. The tooling matters: the joint profile affects water shedding, and a mismatched profile holds water against the new brick.

Curing and cleanup. Fresh mortar needs to cure without drying too fast — in Texas heat, that means the mason works the timing, sometimes misting. Mortar haze gets cleaned off the brick faces before it sets. The wall gets a final wash.

What a day looks like: An experienced mason replaces twenty to forty bricks in a day on straightforward ground-level work — fewer on high work, fewer still on fussy matching or delicate historic brick. When a bid prices fifty replacements, now you know it's roughly a day and a half of skilled labor plus materials, access, and matching time. You're not buying bricks — the units are the cheapest part. You're buying the hands that can cut one out without breaking three.

Chapter 9: Matching the Replacement Brick

A replaced brick that doesn't match is a patch. A replaced brick that matches disappears. The difference is the mason's eye and effort.

The challenge: Your brick has weathered for decades — sun-faded, rain-toned, carrying the patina of its specific exposure. The original is almost certainly discontinued. New brick off the shelf matches the name, not the wall.

The sources, in order of quality: Reclaimed brick — salvaged units from the same era and region — is the gold standard. It has weathered the same way, it's the same clay body, and it takes mortar the same way. Good DFW masonry suppliers keep reclaimed stock; a good mason knows who has your brick. Second: close new matches, chosen with weathering in mind — the mason picks for where your wall is headed, not just where it is today, and may blend units from multiple pallets for tone variation. Third: on large replacement zones, the transition — replacing a full defined area so the change reads as intentional rather than patched.

What it costs: Matching is real money. Sourcing reclaimed

takes time — yard visits, sample comparisons — and reclaimed units cost more per brick than new. A mason who says "I'll match it" without describing how is guessing. A mason who brings you two or three sample bricks, holds them against your wall in daylight, and discusses the tradeoffs is matching.

The Texas reality: DFW's housing stock is mostly post-1960 brick veneer, which means the brick is usually a standard production unit — matching is straightforward more often than not. The hard matches are pre-war brick, handmade units, and anything with an unusual glaze or texture. Know which one you have before you judge the bid.

Chapter 10: Stopping the Spread — Fixing the Water

Replacing spalled bricks without fixing the cause is the most expensive mistake in this book. Here's the water checklist that has to be part of every spalling job.

Find the source. Spalling in a pattern points at water. Under a sill — the sill or the flashing above it. At the base — grading, splash-back, wicking. On the chimney — the crown, the cap, the flashing. In a band across the wall — a failed flashing line, a roof edge dumping water. No pattern, everywhere — systemic: bad mortar, painted walls, or brick that's simply at the end of its life. Diagnose before you repair.

Fix the flashing. Failed, missing, or caulked-shut flashing is behind a huge share of spalling. Flashing's job is to catch water inside the wall and channel it out through weep holes. When it fails — corroded, displaced, or sealed by a well-meaning handyman — water goes where it wants, which is into your brick. Flashing repair is a separate trade skill from brick replacement, and a mason who does both is worth keeping.

Open the weeps. Weep holes at the base of brick veneer walls are the drainage exits. They clog — mortar droppings from construction, mud dauber nests, paint, caulk. Clearing them is a small job with an outsized effect. While you're at it, make sure nobody's caulked them shut since.

Manage the surface water. Grade soil away from the wall. Redirect sprinklers off the brick — daily soaking is a spalling accelerator. Extend downspouts past the foundation. Fix the gutter that's been overflowing onto the wall for three years. None of this is masonry work, and all of it is spalling prevention.

The cap and the crown. On chimneys, parapets, and garden walls — any brickwork with an exposed top — the cap is the weatherproofing. A cracked or missing cap lets water pour down the core of the wall, spalling brick from the inside. Cap replacement is often the highest-value line item on a spalling bid.

Do the water work first, or at minimum as part of the same project. New bricks in a wall that's still getting soaked are future spalls with fresh faces.

Chapter 11: The Chimney — Spalling's Favorite Target

If spalling has a home address in Texas, it's the chimney.

The chimney takes the worst weather on the house — full sun, driving rain from every direction, freeze events with no shelter, and constant thermal cycling from the flue heating and cooling. It's also the most common site of the water failures that cause spalling: cracked crowns, failed flashing, missing caps. The result is that chimneys spall first and worst.

The chimney pattern: Spalling concentrated on the upper courses, worst on the weather side — usually north and east in Texas, the sides that stay wet longest. A cracked concrete crown letting water into the flue chase. Flashing at the roofline that's failed and feeds water into the brick below it. If your chimney is spalling and your walls aren't, the cause is almost certainly in the chimney's own weatherproofing, not a systemic wall problem.

What the repair involves: Spalled brick replacement on the chimney — same surgery as Chapter 8, but at height, which means scaffolding or lift access and the cost that comes with

it. Plus the source: crown repair or replacement, flashing repair, and a proper cap. A chimney spall job without crown and flashing work is half a job — the water's still coming in the top.

The numbers: Chimney spalling repair typically runs \$1,000 to \$3,500 depending on extent and height, with the access equipment adding \$200 to \$600 for scaffolding on a typical job. Small chimney repairs — a dozen bricks and a crown sealing — can come in under \$1,000. A full upper-chimney rebuild with new crown and flashing runs higher. The "depends on" is height and how far the water damage goes down.

The inspection: Walk out with binoculars twice a year and look at your chimney. Spalled faces, white staining, a cracked crown, flashing that's pulling away — all visible from the ground with optics. The chimney is the canary for the whole house's masonry. When it starts spalling, the walls are next if the water management isn't fixed.

Chapter 12: Sealers — The Breathable Rule

"Should I seal my brick?" is one of the most common questions I get, and the answer is: maybe, but only one kind, and only at the right time.

The rule: Any sealer on brick must be breathable — technically, vapor-permeable. It should shed liquid water from the surface while letting water vapor escape from inside the brick. Silane and siloxane-based penetrating sealers are the standard recommendation — they line the pores without sealing them shut. Non-breathable sealers — film-forming coatings that trap vapor — cause exactly the trapped-moisture spalling described in Chapter 5.

When sealing makes sense: After spalling repair, on the repaired wall — a breathable sealer reduces future water absorption and slows the next cycle. On sound brick in high-exposure locations — chimneys, parapets, walls that take driving rain. As part of a maintenance program on an older wall that's starting to show its age.

When it doesn't: Over active spalling — sealing over deteriorating brick traps the moisture that's already in the

wall and accelerates the damage. Seal the repair, not the disease. On walls with unresolved water problems — fix the flashing, the grading, the crown first. A sealer is a raincoat, not a roof. And never as a substitute for replacing spalled bricks — no sealer restores a lost face.

What it costs: Professional application runs \$1 to \$12 per square foot depending on product and access — a wide range because it covers everything from a garden wall to a full house. For most homeowners, sealing is a maintenance expense in the low hundreds for a targeted area, low thousands for a whole house.

The DIY warning: Big-box "brick sealers" vary wildly in quality and breathability. Read the data sheet — if it doesn't say vapor-permeable or breathable explicitly, don't put it on your brick. And never seal a wall that's wet — the sealer traps the moisture that's in there. Dry wall, dry weather, right product. In that order.

Chapter 13: Reading a Spalling Bid — and Spotting the Cheap One

Spalling bids are where the most money gets wasted in residential masonry, because the wrong scope is easy to sell.

The honest bid has: The count or square footage of bricks to be replaced — a number, not "repair brick." The cause identified — what made them spall, in the contractor's words. The source fix included or explicitly scoped — flashing, crown, grading, weeps. The brick matching method — reclaimed, new match, samples. The mortar spec — type and why it's right for your brick. Access equipment listed. Cleanup and protection. Price, schedule, warranty in writing.

The too-cheap bid is missing at least two of those. The classics:

- **No cause identified.** He's replacing bricks without saying why they spalled. The new ones will spall too, and he'll be happy to replace those as well.
- **"Repoint and seal" as the scope.** Repointing doesn't fix spalled bricks and sealing over them accelerates the damage. This bid is either ignorant or dishonest —

either way, don't sign it.

- **No matching method.** One pallet of whatever the yard had. Your wall gets a patchwork quilt.
- **No source fix.** The flashing, the crown, the water — unmentioned. Half a job at full price.
- **Mortar harder than the brick.** If the bid specs Type S for your 1930s soft brick, the contractor is about to cause the next round of spalling himself.

The price sniff test: Spalling replacement at \$11 to \$24 per square foot for veneer is the honest range. A bid at half that is skipping the matching, the source fix, or the proper cutout — or all three. A minimum charge under \$250 for a real replacement job means he's not doing real replacement. And any bid that doesn't mention the cause isn't a spalling bid — it's a brick-swapping bid, and brick-swapping without diagnosis is how you buy the same repair twice.

Chapter 14: DIY — Patching Compounds vs. Real Replacement

The home centers sell brick repair compounds — trowel-grade fillers, epoxy patches, "brick face restorers." Here's my honest take after fifty years.

What they do: Fill the pitted surface where the face popped off. Cosmetically, from ten feet, a patched spall looks better than a hole. For a garden wall, a shed, a low-visibility area — a patch is a reasonable cosmetic holding action.

What they don't do: Restore the brick. The filler is not a fired face — it's softer, it weathers differently, it doesn't bond the way fired clay does, and it doesn't stop the underlying deterioration. Water still gets in around and behind the patch. On a house wall, a patched spall is a patch that will need re-patching, while the brick behind it keeps deteriorating. It's makeup on a wound.

What you can DIY for real: Small-scale repointing around sound bricks. Clearing weep holes. Grading soil away from the wall. Redirecting sprinklers. Applying a breathable sealer to a sound, dry wall. These are genuine homeowner

contributions to spalling prevention — and they're free or cheap.

What belongs to the mason: Cutting out and replacing structural brick units. Any work at height. Matching brick on a visible wall. Diagnosing the cause — because misdiagnosis is how DIY spalling repair becomes professional spalling repair at twice the price. And anything involving the chimney crown or flashing — that's roofing-adjacent work with fall risk and waterproofing consequences.

The honest math: A tube of patch compound is \$15. A mason replacing the brick properly is \$250 minimum. The patch buys you a season of better looks. The replacement buys you decades of wall. On a house you own and care about, that's not a close call.

Chapter 15: Walk Your Own Walls — A

Spalling Inspection

Fifteen minutes, twice a year — spring and fall. Here's the walk.

Start with your hands. Run your palm across the brick at the base of each wall, under every sill, and around the chimney base. You're feeling for roughness, flaking, and pitting — the texture change that eyes miss from a distance. Sound brick feels smooth and hard. Spalling brick feels rough, sandy, or hollow.

Look for the white. Efflorescence — white crystalline staining — marks where water has been moving through the wall. A light dusting is normal aging. Heavy, recurring buildup, especially with flaking brick beneath it, is the salt mechanism at work. Note where it concentrates — that's your water map.

Check the pattern. Spalling in a horizontal band, a cluster under a window, the top of a chimney, the bottom two feet of a wall — patterns point at causes. Random single bricks scattered across a wall often mean those specific units were

under-fired or defective from the start — the weak bricks in the batch giving up first. That's actually good news: replace the weak ones and the wall is fine.

Tap test. Tap suspect bricks with a knuckle or a screwdriver handle. Sound brick rings. Deteriorating brick thuds or sounds hollow. Mark the hollow ones with chalk — that's your replacement list taking shape.

Check the mortar relationship. Remember Chapter 4: if the mortar looks perfect and the brick is dying, suspect hard mortar. If both are failing together, suspect water. The relationship diagnoses the cause.

Look up. Binoculars on the chimney — faces, crown, flashing. Spalling starts high and works down. Catching it at the chimney stage protects the walls below.

Write it down. Which walls, how many bricks, what pattern, what you think the water source is. Hand it to the mason. The homeowner who's done the walk gets the honest bid — and you'll know whether his cause-diagnosis matches what your wall told you.

Chapter 16: Hiring Right — Spalling Work in North Texas

Spalling repair is diagnostic work wearing a mason's apron. Hire the diagnostician, not just the bricklayer.

Get three bids. Ask every bidder the same first question: "Why are these bricks spalling?" The answer tells you everything. "Water's getting in from [specific source]" is a diagnosis. "Brick just does that" is a shrug. "We'll replace them and seal it" without naming the source is a future repeat customer talking — you, repeating.

Ask about the mortar — what type, and why it's right for your brick. On older or softer brick, the wrong answer here disqualifies the bidder on the spot. Ask about matching — where's the brick coming from, can you see samples. Ask about the source fix — flashing, crown, weeps, grading — and whether it's in the scope or a separate conversation. Ask about the warranty — and what it covers if new spalling appears adjacent to the repair.

Check insurance. Ask for a recent spalling job you can drive by — not a photo, an address. Spalling replacement is visible

work; a good one disappears into the wall, and you can verify that with your own eyes from the curb.

Get everything in writing: brick count or square footage, cause and source fix, brick source and matching method, mortar spec, access plan, protection and cleanup, schedule, price, payment terms, warranty. Never pay in full upfront.

And hire somebody who knows Texas brick. Our housing stock, our clay, our weather patterns, our water issues — local knowledge is the difference between a repair that holds and one that spalls again in five years.

If you're in the Fort Worth–Dallas area and want a straight diagnosis on [spalling brick repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — the cause, the bricks, the water, the whole picture — that's what we do. The technical standards behind everything in this book are documented better than anywhere else by the [Brick Industry Association on spalling](<https://www.gobrick.com>) — their technical notes are the industry's reference. And if you want to keep learning before you call anybody, my [free brick repair books](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>) cover the rest of what your masonry is trying to tell you.

A spalled brick is a brick that lost its raincoat. Replace it, fix the water, and the wall stands another fifty years.

Chapter 17: Questions Homeowners Ask Me

Will spalling spread to the whole wall? It can, but it usually doesn't have to. Spalling spreads through water migration — the failed bricks feed moisture to their neighbors. Fix the water and replace the failed units, and the spread stops. Leave it alone, and yes — the damaged area grows every season. The spread is not mysterious. It's plumbing.

My whole wall is spalling. Is it a teardown? Rarely. Even badly spalled walls are usually repairable by replacement in sections — it's labor-intensive, not structural demolition. The question is economic: at some point the replacement count gets high enough that rebuilding the veneer section costs less than surgical replacement brick by brick. A good mason will tell you where that line is for your wall. It's further out than most homeowners fear.

Can you just stucco over spalling brick? You can, and people do — but stucco over a wall that's still taking on water traps the moisture behind the stucco, and now you have two failing systems. If the water source is fixed and the wall is sound beneath, stucco or render over brick is a legitimate

aesthetic choice. As a cover-up for active spalling, it's a burial, not a repair.

Is spalling covered by homeowners insurance? Almost never. Insurance covers sudden damage — storm, impact. Spalling is gradual deterioration, which policies exclude as maintenance. The exception is spalling caused by a covered event — say, a roof failure in a storm that poured water into the wall. But "my bricks are flaking" is not a claim.

How long do replacement bricks last? As long as the originals would have — decades — provided the cause is fixed and the replacement brick is appropriate quality. The new bricks aren't the weak link. The water management is. Get that right and the repair outlasts the mortgage.

The brick is spalling but the house was just built. What gives? New-construction spalling usually means one of three things: defective brick (under-fired units in the batch), water getting in through incomplete flashing or missing weeps, or the brick being soaked during construction and frozen before the wall dried. On a new build, this is a builder-warranty conversation — document it, notify in writing, and don't let it age out of the warranty period while you "watch it."

Should I worry about spalling on a garden wall or is it just the house? Worry about both, but triage honestly. A garden wall spalling is cosmetic and low-stakes — patch it, monitor it, replace bricks at your leisure. A house wall spalling is the building envelope — water in the wall affects everything behind it. Same disease, different urgency.

A Final Word Before You Call

Spalling looks like a surface problem. It isn't. It's a water problem wearing a brick problem's clothes.

The formula: diagnose the cause — water, mortar, trapped moisture, salts. Replace what's lost — the bricks without faces aren't coming back. Fix the source — the flashing, the crown, the grading, the weeps. Then protect the repair — breathable sealer, maintained drainage, twice-yearly walks.

Do all four and the wall stands fifty years. Skip the diagnosis and you're buying bricks twice. Skip the water fix and you're buying them three times.

Your bricks have been talking. Now you speak the language.

About the Author

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