

The Texas Heat Book: How 100-Degree Summers Age Your Brick

Brick Damage from Heat in Texas: What a Decade of Triple-
Digit Summers Does to Your Walls

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Chapter 1: Brick Damage from Heat in Texas Starts With Expansion

Every summer in Texas, your brick walls do something you'd never guess by looking at them: they grow. Then every night, they shrink back. Then they grow again the next day. All summer long, for a hundred days straight, your walls are breathing in and out with the temperature — and over a decade, that breathing wears them out.

I've been doing this 50 years, and I can tell you the Texas sun is the slowest, steadiest enemy your brickwork has. It doesn't knock a wall down in a day like a storm does. It works the joints a fraction of a millimeter at a time, ten thousand cycles at a time, until one August you notice the mortar crumbling out of the south wall and you wonder when that started. It started the first summer. You're just seeing it now.

So let's answer the question straight: does heat damage brick? Yes — not the way a hammer damages brick, but the way time damages everything. Heat moves masonry, dries it out, breaks down what holds it together, and opens the door for water to finish the job. This book is about what triple-digit

Texas summers do to brick over a decade, and the cheap maintenance that slows it down. It's the hot-weather companion to the other books in this series — the soil book covers what the ground does to your walls, the storm book covers what the sky drops on them. This one is about the sun.

How a brick wall moves in a Texas summer

Brick and mortar are both porous, rigid materials, and both of them expand when they get hot and contract when they cool. On a July afternoon in Dallas, the sun-facing side of your house can be dramatically hotter than the air temperature — dark brick in direct sun soaks up radiant heat all day. Then the sun drops, the evening cools, and the wall gives that heat back and shrinks. The swing between a 105-degree afternoon wall and a 78-degree night wall happens every single day for months.

One day's movement is tiny — fractions of an inch across a long wall. You'd never see it. But here's the thing about masonry: it's strong in compression and weak in tension, and it doesn't like being pulled. When a long wall tries to grow and something holds it back — the foundation below, the framing behind, the corner where it meets another wall — the growth turns into stress. Stress repeated daily becomes

fatigue. Fatigue becomes hairline cracks in the mortar joints, and hairline cracks become the front door for water.

The walls that show it first are always the same ones: south-facing and west-facing walls, the ones that take the sun's strongest rays for the longest hours every day. Walk around any twenty-year-old brick house in Texas and compare the south wall to the north wall. The south wall's mortar will look older. It is older, in the only way that counts — it's lived more thermal cycles.

Why the joints fail before the brick

In a brick wall, the mortar joints are the designated weak point — and I mean that as a compliment. Mortar is supposed to be softer than the brick so that when the wall moves, the mortar gives instead of the brick cracking. That's good design. But it means the joints absorb every one of those daily expansion cycles, and after enough summers, they start to give permanently.

Here's how it goes. Heat drives moisture out of the mortar. The mortar dries, shrinks slightly, and loses some of its bond to the brick. The next hot day expands the wall; the joint, now a little weaker, takes a little more stress. Cooling contracts

everything; the weakened joint doesn't quite pull back to where it was. Multiply by a few thousand days. Eventually you've got mortar that's powdering at the surface, hairline cracks running along the joints, and joints that have receded enough to catch your fingernail. The wall hasn't failed. But its weather skin is thinning, and in Texas, the weather skin is everything — because what comes after the heat is always water, and water is what actually destroys masonry.

That's the pattern to hold in your head for this whole book: heat opens the door, water walks through it. Almost every heat-related brick problem you'll read about in the next chapters ends with moisture doing the final damage. The maintenance in Chapter 7 is all about keeping that door closed.

Chapter 2: The Mortar Bake-Out — Sun Damage to Mortar Over the Years

If you want to see what a decade of Texas sun does to mortar, you don't need instruments. You need a screwdriver and a south-facing wall. On a twenty-year-old house that's never been repointed, take a flathead screwdriver and drag it lightly across a mortar joint on the south wall, then do the same on the north wall. On the north side, the screwdriver skates. On the south side, it digs in and leaves a little trail of sand. That's the bake-out. The sun has been slowly turning the surface of that mortar back into sand, one summer at a time.

What the sun actually does to a mortar joint

Sun damage to mortar works on two fronts: heat and ultraviolet light.

The heat front is the drying. Mortar cures by hydration — the cement in it needs water to complete its chemical hardening, and it keeps a small amount of moisture in its pores for its whole life. Relentless Texas heat drives that moisture out, year after year. Dried-out mortar shrinks, gets brittle, and

loses the slight flexibility that lets it ride the wall's daily expansion. Brittle mortar doesn't bend with the thermal cycle — it cracks with it. And once a joint has hairline cracks, the next hot day drives the cracks a little deeper, because now the sun is heating the inside of the joint too.

The ultraviolet front is slower and quieter. UV breaks down the surface chemistry of the mortar over time — the same way it fades paint and rots plastic. You can see it in the color: mortar on the sun-blasted walls goes pale and chalky compared to the shaded walls. That chalky surface is mortar that's lost its surface strength. It's the first thing to powder off under your screwdriver, and it's the first place water gets a grip.

The ten-year timeline

Mortar doesn't fail on a schedule, but on a Texas house with no maintenance, the pattern is consistent enough that I can describe it:

Years 1–5: Invisible. The joints look fine. The thermal cycling is happening, the drying is happening, but the mortar still has its full strength and the surface still sheds water. This is the period when maintenance is cheapest and most effective —

and the period when nobody does it, because nothing looks wrong.

Years 5–10: The south and west walls start to show it. Mortar looks pale and feels slightly rough. Hairline cracks appear along some joints, usually starting at the corners of windows and the tops of walls where stress concentrates. If you know what you're looking at, you can see the wall aging. Most homeowners don't notice yet.

Years 10–20: Now it's visible to everyone. Mortar powdering out of the joints on the sun sides. Joints receding — you can see the shadow line where the mortar has worn back from the brick face. Some joints cracking through. Water that used to sheet off the wall now soaks into the joints and sits there, and every wet-dry cycle works the damage deeper. This is when repointing starts becoming necessary rather than optional.

Years 20–30: On an unmaintained Texas house, this is the repointing window. The mortar on the sun walls is failing broadly — crumbling, falling out in places, joints open enough to let real water into the wall. The companion book in this series on tuckpointing costs covers the 2026 numbers in detail, but the short version is that straightforward

repointing on a Texas home typically runs \$10 to \$20 per square foot, and the sun-facing walls are always the first ones that need it.

The honest summary: Texas sun doesn't destroy mortar quickly, but it destroys it inevitably. Twenty to thirty years is the normal service life of a mortar joint on a Texas home, and the sun is the reason the south wall hits the end of that life first.

Why the shaded walls last longer

This is worth stating plainly because it proves the point: on the same house, built the same day with the same mortar by the same mason, the north-facing joints routinely outlast the south-facing joints by years. Same material, same age, different sun exposure, different lifespan. The only variable is heat and UV. When a homeowner asks me "does heat damage brick," I don't give them a theory — I walk them around their own house and show them the difference between the two sides. The house is the experiment, and it's been running for twenty years.

Chapter 3: Thermal Shock — The Summer Storm Problem

Texas doesn't just do heat. It does heat followed by violence — a 104-degree afternoon that ends with a black-sky thunderstorm dropping two inches of rain in forty minutes and knocking the temperature down thirty degrees. Anybody who's lived here knows that storm. What most people don't know is what it does to a hot brick wall.

It's called thermal shock, and the mechanics are simple. Your brick wall has spent all day soaking up heat — the brick faces are hot clean through. Then cold rainwater hits the hot surface all at once. The outer skin of the brick tries to contract rapidly while the inside is still expanded. That differential — surface shrinking, core still swollen — puts the brick face in tension, and brick is weak in tension. Do it once, nothing happens. Do it fifty times a summer for twenty summers, and you get micro-fractures in the brick faces and the mortar joints: tiny cracks you can't see yet, but water can find.

This is the same family of damage as freeze-thaw — water

getting into small cracks and working them wider — except the trigger isn't ice, it's the speed of the temperature swing. A gradual cool-down at sunset is gentle. A cold downpour on a baking wall is abrupt, and abruptness is what cracks things. The walls that take the worst of it are, again, the sun-blasted south and west walls: they're the hottest when the storm hits, so they experience the biggest shock.

What thermal shock looks like after a decade

You won't see a single storm's damage. What you'll see, years later, is the accumulation: brick faces on the weather side starting to craze with fine surface cracks, mortar joints that have opened into hairlines along the sun walls, and a general roughness to masonry that used to be crisp. On chimneys — which take the worst beating on any house, full sun plus the heat of the flue — thermal shock works together with the daily expansion cycle to age the top of the stack faster than anything else on the house. There's a companion book in this series on chimneys that goes deep on crowns, caps, and flashing; the heat angle is that your chimney lives the hardest thermal life of any masonry on your property, and it shows.

There's not much you can do about the storms themselves — that's Texas. What you can do is keep the wall's defenses up

so the micro-fractures never become water's entry points: sound mortar joints, intact sealant in the expansion joints, and a breathable water repellent on the most exposed walls. That's Chapter 7. The shock will still happen; the damage doesn't have to follow.

The attic-and-wall connection nobody mentions

One more heat effect worth knowing, because it surprises homeowners: the temperature difference between your blazing-hot brick veneer and your air-conditioned interior creates a constant thermal gradient across the wall. In summer, the outside face can be fifty or sixty degrees hotter than the inside face. That gradient drives moisture movement through the wall assembly — water vapor migrating from hot to cool, condensing where it finds a cold surface. On a well-built wall with a proper air gap, flashing, and weep holes, that moisture drains out the bottom and nobody ever knows. On a wall where the weep holes are clogged with mortar droppings or landscaping mulch is piled against the brick, the moisture sits in the wall and works on the mortar from the inside while the sun works it from the outside. Two fronts, same joint. Keep your weep holes clear — it's a five-minute job with a piece of wire, and it matters

more in August than in any other month.

Chapter 4: Expansion Joints — The Relief Valves Nobody Maintains

If thermal expansion is the pressure, expansion joints are the relief valves. They're the deliberate gaps the builder left in your brickwork so the wall has somewhere to grow on a hot afternoon without tearing itself apart. And on most Texas houses I walk, they're the most neglected maintenance item on the entire exterior.

What you're looking at

An expansion joint in brick veneer is a vertical gap running clean through the brick wythe — no mortar in it — filled with a backer rod and a flexible sealant. You'll find them as straight vertical lines in the brickwork, often slightly recessed, sometimes with visible caulk-like material in them. The industry guidance (the Brick Industry Association's technical notes, which is what good builders follow) calls for vertical expansion joints spaced no more than about 25 feet apart on plain walls, closer — about 20 feet — on walls with a lot of windows and doors, and always within about 10 feet of a building corner. They're also placed at offsets, setbacks, and

where the wall changes height.

Here's what that means in plain English: your brick walls were designed to move in sections, each section growing and shrinking between its joints, with the flexible sealant absorbing the difference. It's a good system. It only works if the sealant stays flexible.

What Texas heat does to the sealant

The sealant in your expansion joints is usually a polyurethane or silicone product, and Texas gives it the same treatment it gives everything else: UV degradation and thermal fatigue. After ten to fifteen years, the sealant hardens, shrinks, and pulls away from the sides of the joint. It cracks. Pieces fall out. And now your relief valve is a direct channel for water into the wall cavity.

Failed expansion-joint sealant is one of the most common water-entry points I find on Texas homes, and it's almost never the homeowner's fault for not knowing — nobody told them the joints needed maintenance. But here's the thing: when the sealant fails, the joint can't do its thermal job either. A joint packed with hardened, shrunken sealant — or worse, a joint some handyman filled with mortar — doesn't flex. The

wall section tries to expand against a rigid joint, and the stress goes into the nearest mortar joints instead. That's how you get cracking radiating out from a failed expansion joint: the relief valve rusted shut, so the pressure found another way out.

Maintaining them — the cheapest insurance on the wall

Walk your expansion joints once a year, spring is fine. You're looking for sealant that's cracked, pulling away from the brick edges, missing in chunks, or hard as a rock when you press it with your thumb. Good sealant stays slightly rubbery. Bad sealant looks like dried-out caulk around an old bathtub — because that's essentially what it is.

Resealing expansion joints is straightforward work: cut out the old sealant, install new backer rod at the right depth, and tool in new sealant rated for masonry expansion joints. It's a fraction of the cost of repointing a wall — a few hundred dollars of a handyman's or mason's time on a typical house versus thousands for the wall repair that failed joints eventually cause. And it has to be the right material: never let anyone fill an expansion joint with mortar. Mortar in an expansion joint is like welding a pressure relief valve shut. The joint must stay flexible, or it isn't a joint anymore.

One more thing to check while you're there: make sure nobody — a painter, a previous owner, a well-meaning handyman — has caulked over your weep holes at the base of the wall. Weep holes are the little gaps in the bottom course of brick that let water drain out of the wall cavity. Painted-shut weep holes are depressingly common, and in a Texas summer, with the thermal gradient driving moisture through the wall the way Chapter 3 described, blocked weeps turn the bottom of your wall into a swamp. Clear them with a piece of stiff wire. It takes minutes.

Chapter 5: Sprinklers, Hard Water, and Stains

— The Other Summer Enemy

Texas summers mean sprinklers running, and sprinklers running means water hitting brick. All over North Texas I see the same thing: a brick wall with a pale, crusty white fan spreading out from where a sprinkler head has been soaking it every morning for five years. Or orange-brown streaks bleeding down from under a windowsill. Homeowners assume the brick is failing. Usually it isn't — it's being watered like a lawn, and brick was never meant to be a plant.

The white crust: hard water and efflorescence

Two different things make white stains on brick, and it helps to know which one you're looking at.

Hard-water deposits come from the sprinkler itself. Texas municipal and well water carries dissolved minerals — calcium, magnesium, the usual suspects. Every time the sprinkler soaks the wall and the water evaporates in the afternoon sun, it leaves the minerals behind. Day after day, summer after summer, the deposits build into a crusty white scale on the brick faces. It's ugly, and if you let it build for

years it can be genuinely hard to remove — but it's on the surface, not in the wall.

Efflorescence is different. Those are water-soluble salts migrating *out* of the brick and mortar themselves. Brick is porous; water gets in, dissolves trace salts in the masonry, carries them to the surface, and evaporates, leaving a soft white powder. New masonry does this for its first year or two as construction moisture works its way out — that's normal and it usually weathers away on its own. But efflorescence that keeps coming back year after year, or shows up on a twenty-year-old wall, is telling you water is getting into the wall from somewhere it shouldn't: a sprinkler soaking the wall daily, a failed sealant joint, a gutter dumping roof water against the brick.

Cleaning it — and the order that matters

Here's the order, and the order is the whole job: **fix the water first, clean second**. Scrubbing the stains off a wall that a sprinkler still hits every morning is mopping the floor with the tap running. Redirect the sprinkler head, fix the gutter, reseal the joint — stop the water — and then clean.

For light mineral deposits and fresh efflorescence, start

gentle: dry-brush the powder off with a stiff brush. Most efflorescence is water-soluble and a surprising amount of it comes off dry. For harder deposits, a mild acid solution — plain white vinegar diluted with water, sprayed on, left a few minutes, scrubbed lightly, and rinsed — handles a lot of mild hard-water spotting. Don't wash efflorescence off in cold, damp weather; you'll just drive the salts back in and they'll bloom again. Warm, dry weather, that's the time.

For heavy, built-up mineral scale that vinegar won't touch, the masonry industry makes dedicated acidic cleaners for exactly this — products like PROSOCO's Sure Klean 1261 Hard Water Deposit Remover are the professional-grade answer, strong concentrated acidic cleaners made to break the bond of mineral deposits on masonry. They're effective and they're serious chemistry: follow the dilution directions exactly, protect nearby plants and metal, rinse thoroughly, and test a small area first. If the deposits are years deep and cover a big area, this is a job for a pro with the right products and the rinse equipment — a homeowner with a gallon of acid and a garden hose can etch the brick faces trying to save them.

One thing to never do: don't go at brick with a pressure washer on a tight nozzle. High-pressure water drives water

deep into the wall, erodes the mortar joints, and can blast the faces off softer brick. If a pressure washer is used at all, it's low pressure, wide fan, kept moving — and honestly, on most Texas brick, the chemical route followed by a gentle rinse does a better job with less risk.

The orange streaks: rust and iron

If your water comes from a well, or your sprinkler heads are old steel, you may get orange-brown staining instead of white — iron in the water oxidizing on the brick surface. Same rule applies: fix the source first (a rusted head, iron-heavy well water hitting the wall), then clean. Acidic masonry cleaners handle iron staining too, with the same cautions. And if the staining is coming from a rusting lintel or steel element *inside* the wall — orange weeping out of a mortar joint rather than sprayed on the face — that's a different problem wearing a similar costume. Rust inside the wall means steel expanding as it corrodes, and that's a structural conversation, not a cleaning conversation. There's a companion book in this series on rust and lintels that covers it.

Prevention is a sprinkler adjustment

The cheapest fix in this chapter costs nothing: walk your

sprinkler zones and look at where the water actually lands. Heads drift, get bumped by mowers, get replaced with the wrong arc. Any head throwing water against the house should be adjusted, redirected, or swapped for a head with the right pattern. Brick is a rain screen — it's designed to shed rain running down its face, not to be pressure-soaked from the side twice a day. Keep the water on the grass and off the wall, and most of this chapter never happens to you.

Chapter 6: Texas Summer Brick Maintenance

— The Cheap Stuff That Works

Everything in this book so far has been the problem. This chapter is the answer, and I'll lead with the good news: the maintenance that slows Texas heat aging is cheap, simple, and mostly DIY. None of it requires a contractor. All of it costs less than the repair it prevents.

The sealer question — and the right kind

The single highest-value maintenance item for a sun-blasted brick wall is a breathable water repellent — a penetrating silane/siloxane sealer. Let me explain what that means, because the wrong sealer is worse than no sealer.

Brick needs to breathe. Water vapor moves through masonry constantly — remember the thermal gradient from Chapter 3, driving moisture through the wall all summer. A *penetrating* sealer soaks into the brick and mortar and lines the pores with a water-repelling chemistry, so liquid rainwater can't get in but water vapor can still get out. The wall sheds rain and exhales vapor. That's what you want.

A *film-forming* sealer — the shiny, plasticky kind, or worse, paint — coats the surface and traps vapor inside the wall. In a Texas summer, trapped moisture plus heat plus the daily expansion cycle is a recipe for spalling: the brick faces pop off because the water behind the film has nowhere to go. I've seen beautiful brick ruined by a well-meaning coat of the wrong product. If the product makes the brick shiny, it's wrong for brick. Penetrating sealers don't change how the wall looks — that's how you know it's the right kind.

What it costs. A gallon of quality penetrating silane/siloxane sealer runs roughly \$40 to \$70 at retail, and a gallon covers a few hundred square feet depending on how porous your brick is — thirsty old brick drinks more, dense brick less. A homeowner with a pump sprayer can do the sun-facing walls of a typical house in a Saturday for the price of a few gallons. Professional application, per published industry guides, typically runs a few dollars per square foot — one widely cited guide puts penetrating sealer application around \$2.50 to \$3.50 per square foot including prep. As with everything in this trade, the real number depends on the wall: height, access, condition, and how much cleaning has to happen first. What I can tell you for certain is the ratio: sealing costs a fraction of repointing, and repointing costs a fraction of

rebuilding. The money always flows toward whoever maintained earliest.

When to apply. Sealers need the wall clean, dry, and within the product's temperature window — most want air and surface temperatures above about 50°F and no rain for a day or so after. Spring and fall are the sweet spots in Texas. Don't seal over efflorescence — clean it first, fix the water source first (Chapter 5's rule), then seal. And don't seal a wall with failing mortar expecting the sealer to hold it together. Sealer protects sound masonry; it doesn't repair unsound masonry. Repoint first, seal after.

Timing your masonry work around the heat

Here's something homeowners never think about and masons think about constantly: you can't lay good mortar in 105-degree heat without precautions. Fresh mortar needs moisture to cure properly — the cement hydrates over days, and if the Texas sun flash-dries the joint in an hour, the mortar never reaches its full strength. It'll look fine and fail early.

Good Texas masons schedule around this: masonry work starts early in the morning, materials stay shaded, and on

brutal days the fresh joints get misted and covered to slow the cure. If you're hiring repointing work in July or August, ask the mason how he handles hot-weather curing. A specific answer — "we start at six, we shade the wall, we mist the joints" — is the right answer. A shrug means your new mortar is going to bake before it cures. Spring and fall are the best seasons for masonry work in Texas, for exactly this reason. The wall is cooler, the mortar cures properly, and the mason isn't racing the sun.

The annual summer walk

Once a year — late spring, before the real heat sets in — walk the whole house with the eyes this book has given you:

1. **Mortar joints on the sun walls.** Screwdriver test from Chapter 2. Powdery, receding, or cracked joints go on the watch list; joints losing material go on the repair list.
2. **Expansion joints.** Press the sealant with your thumb. Cracked, hard, or missing sealant gets resealed before summer.
3. **Weep holes.** Clear with a wire. Make sure nobody painted them shut.
4. **Sprinkler arcs.** Run each zone and watch where the

water lands. Nothing should be hitting the brick.

5. **Caulk at windows and doors.** The sealant where the window frame meets the brick takes the same UV beating as the expansion joints. Cracked or missing caulk is a water entry point — scrape it out and replace it. A \$10 tube of the right sealant, properly applied, keeps gallons of storm water out of the wall.
6. **Stains.** Any new white or orange staining gets the Chapter 5 treatment: find the water source first, then clean.

That walk takes an hour. It catches everything in this book while it's still cheap. For broader guidance on protecting a Texas home from heat — the kind that covers the roof, the attic, and the yard as well as the walls — the [Texas A&M AgriLife Extension on heat and homes](<https://agrilifeextension.tamu.edu>) is the state's own research arm, and their housing and heat materials are worth your time. They study exactly this climate, because they live in it too.

Chapter 7: What the Heat Does to Everything Attached to the Brick

So far this book has been about the brick and mortar themselves. But a brick wall doesn't stand alone — it's got windows, trim, flashing, gutters, and a roofline hanging off it, and the Texas sun beats on all of that too. Heat damage to the attachments becomes water damage to the brick, so this chapter belongs here.

Caulk and sealants at every opening. Every window and door in a brick wall sits in a gap filled with sealant, and that sealant lives the same UV-and-thermal-cycle life as the expansion joints from Chapter 4. On the south and west sides, window caulk typically gives up years before the north side's does — it hardens, cracks, and pulls away from the brick or the frame. A failed window seal doesn't just leak air and run up your electric bill; it's a direct water path into the wall cavity every time a storm blows rain against that wall. When you do your annual summer walk, run a finger along the caulk lines on the sun sides. If it's brittle or gapped, cut it out and replace it. A \$10 tube of quality exterior sealant and half

an hour per window is the cheapest water defense on the house.

Wood trim, fascia, and paint. The south-facing fascia boards, frieze boards, and trim take the same solar beating as the brick, except wood and paint show it faster: paint blisters and peels on the sun side while the north side still looks fresh, and the bare wood underneath starts checking and rotting. Rotted trim against brick isn't just ugly — it holds moisture against the masonry and gives water a bridge past the flashing. If you're repainting anyway, the sun sides need it first and most often. That's not a defect; that's the maintenance schedule the Texas sun wrote for you.

Flashing and the roofline. Metal flashing expands in heat just like everything else, and the roofline is the hottest real estate on the house — dark shingles radiating heat down onto the flashing and the top courses of brick all afternoon. Over the years, thermal cycling works flashing loose at the fasteners, opens laps, and cracks the roofing cement sealing the joints. Loose step flashing where a roof meets a brick wall is one of the most common leak sources I find, and the leak shows up inside as a ceiling stain two rooms away from where the water actually entered. If you're up there for any

reason — or paying someone who is — have them look at the flashing while they're there. The incremental cost of an inspection is nothing next to the cost of the leak it prevents.

Gutters in the heat. Long gutter runs expand and contract with temperature, and on a forty-foot run the movement is enough to work hangers loose and open seams over the years. A gutter that sags or pulls away from the fascia stops carrying water and starts dumping it — usually right against the brick, right where you don't want it. Summer is when you notice it, because summer is when the gully-washers come. Keep the hangers tight, the seams sealed, and the downspouts extended away from the foundation. A gutter problem is a brick problem wearing a disguise.

The attic cooking the wall from inside. Texas attics hit temperatures that would cook an egg — 140, 150 degrees on a bad August afternoon. All that heat presses down and out against the top of your walls from the inside while the sun presses in from the outside. The top courses of brick, the frieze area, and the soffits live in that sandwich. It's one more reason the upper walls and the chimney — the chimney especially, with flue heat added to solar heat — age fastest. Proper attic ventilation doesn't just lower your cooling bill; it

lowers the thermal stress on the top of your masonry. If your attic's a furnace, your brick's upper courses are paying part of the price.

The thread through all of this: heat rarely destroys any one component outright. It loosens, dries, cracks, and opens — and then water does the destroying. Maintain the attachments and the brick lasts. Ignore them and the brick pays for their failure.

Chapter 8: The Ten-Year Plan — What a Decade of Summers Costs If You Ignore It

Let me show you the math of neglect, because it's the most persuasive argument in this book and I don't have to exaggerate a word of it.

Take two identical Texas brick houses, built the same year, side by side. On House A, the owner does the annual summer walk from Chapter 6. She reseals the expansion joints once in ten years, keeps the sprinklers off the brick, puts a penetrating sealer on the south and west walls twice in ten years, and recaulks the windows when the caulk cracks. Total spend over the decade: a few hundred dollars in materials and a few Saturdays. Her mortar at year ten looks like year three.

On House B, nobody does anything. By year ten, the south wall's mortar is powdering and receding, the expansion-joint sealant failed at year eight and nobody noticed, and storm water has been entering the joints for two summers. At year twelve, the owner finally calls a mason. The south and west walls need repointing — and because water's been getting in,

some of the brick faces have started spalling and need replacement too. The bill is thousands, where House A's bill was hundreds.

That's the compounding: heat opens the door, water walks through, and every year the water's inside, the repair gets bigger. A \$200 sealer job at year five prevents a \$2,000 repointing job at year fifteen. A \$300 expansion-joint reseal prevents the wall-cavity water damage that turns into a five-figure repair. The ratios are always lopsided in favor of whoever acted early. In fifty years, I've never seen it go the other way.

The honest cost ladder

Since this is a straight-talk book, here's the ladder the way it actually stacks up, cheapest first:

- **Annual walk and minor caulking:** tens of dollars, your own time. Catches everything.
- **DIY penetrating sealer on the sun walls:** roughly \$40 to \$70 a gallon, a few gallons per application, every five to eight years. The cheapest real protection money can buy.
- **Expansion-joint resealing:** a few hundred dollars for

a pro on a typical house — or a weekend DIY for the handy. Prevents the water entry that causes the expensive stuff.

- **Professional sealer application:** a few dollars per square foot per published guides — worth it for two-story walls or whole-house coverage where DIY spraying gets impractical.
- **Repointing the sun walls:** \$10 to \$20 per square foot in Texas, per the companion cost book — the bill that arrives when the maintenance didn't happen.
- **Brick replacement and wall rebuilds:** where spalling and water damage take you if the repointing waited too long. Nobody wants this rung of the ladder.

Every rung exists because the one below it was skipped. The ladder only goes up.

What I want you to take from this book

Texas heat is not an emergency. It's a condition — like the clay soil in the companion book, like the storms in the next one. You don't fix the Texas summer. You manage your house through it, the way Texans have always managed: steadily, cheaply, and before the problem, not after.

If you remember nothing else, remember the three sentences: heat opens the door, water walks through it, and the maintenance that keeps the door closed costs almost nothing. Walk the house every spring. Keep the sun walls sealed, the joints flexing, the sprinklers off the brick, and the weep holes open. That's [brick maintenance in Texas](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) in its entirety — not a product, not a program, just attention paid once a year.

Your brick was built to last a century. The Texas sun will try to make it thirty years. The difference between those two numbers is you, a pump sprayer, and a Saturday in April.

About the Author

Travis Nech has spent 50 years in Texas brick, masonry, and foundation work. He owns [Champion Brick Repair](<https://championbrickrepair.com>) — (817) 900-6324 — [Metro Foundation Repair](<https://metrofoundationrepair.com>) — (817) 670-4474 — and the [LintelLOCK](<https://lintlerepair.com>) lintel system — (469) 730-0650. All his books are free at [Travis Nech's Free Book Library](<https://metro-foundation-repair.web.app/free-books/>).