



CPG Tools for Success

2025 Concrete Language Alert: The Phrase “*Finishing Aid*”

The term “*finishing aid*” is widely used in product sheets, labels, specs, and sales conversations. **But it does not mean one specific product.** Instead, it refers to several very different materials. This confusion is causing real-world misapplications, bans, and disputes.

The Problem:

- “Finishing aid” is **not a product category or a specific product.**
- Different stakeholders use the term for different materials.
- Results: miscommunication, improper restrictions, finger-pointing when defects appear.

The Reality: 5 Different Products Labeled as “Finishing Aid”

Product Type	Application	Purpose	Risk of Confusion
Evaporation Retarder (Surface spray)	Sprayed uniformly on surface, 90% water (NOT worked in)	Slows moisture loss in hot/windy/low humidity days	Misused if finished into surface → weak surface, scaling, flaking
Surface Treatments (Newer category)	Sprayed on surface (chemicals: silanes, siloxanes, colloidal silicas, etc.)	Improves surface workability, some claim improves durability	Marketed as “finishing aid”, confused as an evaporation retarder, completely different products
Colloidal Silica (Surface Spray)	Sprayed on surface	Marketed as “finishing aid” or curing aid	Can be confused with evaporation retarders, not the same
Colloidal Silica (Admixture)	Added at ready-mix plant	Marketed as internal curing, strength/durability aid	Can be confused with other admixtures, not the same
Viscosity Modifiers (Admixture)	Added at ready-mix plant	Improves finishability, extends working time	Can be confused with evaporation retarders, and other admixtures.

Real-World Examples:

- **Specifier Ban:** Viscosity modifying admixture rejected because specifier thought it was an another (completely different) admixture, both used “finishing aid” as descriptor.
- **Municipal Restriction:** Colloidal silica surface treatments banned due to confusion with evaporation retarders, both used “finishing aid” on their label.

What To Do Now:

- **Do NOT** use the blanket term “*finishing aid*.”
- **DO** name the exact product type (evaporation retarder, viscosity modifier, colloidal silica, etc.).
- **Clarify intent** in specs, submittals, and conversations to avoid miscommunication.

Bottom line:

“Finishing aid” is not one thing. Be precise. Say what product you mean.