

EIFS: Exterior Insulating and Finishing System

a.k.a. "synthetic stucco"

The Product:

- EIFS, hard coat and hybrids stuccos: They all experience similar problems but the most pressing concern is the EIFS systems. Problems occur more quickly in EIFS than other products.
- NC has been seriously effected and has enacted strict regulation on its use. There are tens of thousands of these installations nationwide.
- Manufacturers admit even an ideal installation is prone to water penetration.
- Retrofits and repairs by manufacturers, exceeding their own installation specifications have had reoccurring problems within 1 year.

The Problems:

Moisture penetration:

- Water penetration is not in and of itself the problem, it is water retention. Water is always penetrating brick and wood, the key is that it can run out and evaporate. In fact in a 40mph driving rain, water goes right through brick! The EIFS system is designed to be water tight and thus does not allow for moisture to escape, thus, even a small amount of moisture entering the system is trapped and combined with non treated lumber it quickly destroys the framing of the house and compromises the structural integrity.

Structure:

- Moisture and wood do not mix. The framing deteriorates rapidly creating a loss of structural integrity.

Mildew:

- A wet house is a breeding ground for disease, especially mold, fungus and mildew.
- If you can see it on the exterior, imagine what's inside the walls.
- The full impact of health problems may not be realized for years.

Cosmetics:

- Streaking, rust, calcium buildup.
- Eventually the stucco itself will pull away from the house.

**Moisture can enter the system and
get behind it in a number of ways...**

Penetrations through the wall:

- Windows, doors, hose bibs, dryer vents, ac lines, gutter straps, mailboxes, railings.
- Meeting of dissimilar surfaces.
- Joints at foundation, wood trim, window trim, stone, brick, concrete.

Defects or cracking of the system:

- Settling.
- Improper fastening.
- Incorrect foundation and/or footings.

Improper installation:

- EIFS should be used only on vertical surfaces: trim, decorative touches like keystones and quoins, should have sloping surface to prevent standing water and to route it away
- ELFS should be 2" off any roofline : 6-8" off the ground, 1/2" from all other materials (windows & doors). All end points (terminations) must be back wrapped.
- Expansion joints required at the meeting of dissimilar materials and floor levels.
- All joints must be isolated from other materials by leaving 1/2" gap (back wrapped) and creating a flexible joint with the usage of a backer rod and appropriate sealant.
- Flashing must be in place to direct water away from structure (doors, windows, decks, gutters, etc.)

Lack of maintenance:

- Paint and caulk must be monitored and repaired frequently.

Interior leaks:

- Tub overflows.
- Shower leaks.
- Washer overflows.

Impact on the market:

The full impact will not be know for many years

- Costly repairs for home owners.
- Stigmatized homes that are difficult to sell.
- A decrease in property values for stucco owners.
- An increase in demand for brick homes as well as siding and cedar.
- A new industry to address testing and repair needs.

Liability:

- There is no way to catch all the moisture.
- Many inspectors will not test (expertise and liability).
- Agents need to make clients aware of potential problems.
- Class actions suits underway.

The Solution:

The solution is not the "new & improved" stucco you have heard about!

- There is no reason to believe this product will provide any measurable benefit.
- Even if it worked there is still the stigma of stucco.
- By design, stucco products retain any moisture that gets behind them.

Retro fit with another exterior:

- This is an extreme measure. You should consult your builder or contractor.
- This would be a good time to invest in brick stock.
- Cedar contemporary homes are now looking very good!

Have your home tested ASAP:

- Document the results and retest yearly.
- A proven track record of a dry house will help to sell it later.

This document was produced by Tom Schroth, Candidate member with GAM, and licensed Realtor. There are no definitive answers on the subject of EIFS and this information should be used only as a reference. Agents and consumers must evaluate all information available on EIFS and make their own determinations on the subject.