Is stucco a masonry product? —Via e-mail

No. Masonry is construction that uses masonry units including brick, concrete block, stone, tile, and glass block, which are bound together using mortar. Stucco is Portland cement plaster, which is very similar in composition to several components of certain types of masonry. Stucco is applied over a substrate by a plasterer, not a mason, and is either trowel applied or machine and trowel applied. Stucco, however, is often applied over a masonry surface.

I am in litigation that involves drywall and the taping joints. Are there any published standards on the process, when to use fiber vs. paper tape, use of caulk on cracks before painting, etc.? —Via e-mail

I tend to get queasy when I read the word “litigation” but I got some real top quality help on this one by posting it on AWCI’s NetForum (www.awci.org). ASTM has a couple of specifications, but they’re a bit subjective as far as the final finish is concerned. The pertinent ASTM standards, and a few others, are referenced in the Gypsum Association’s GA-2 16-2000 Application and Finishing of Gypsum Board, and AWCI’s Technical Manual No. 11, Guide for the Finishing of Gypsum Board.

Mark Fowler of the Northwest Wall and Ceiling Bureau advises, via the Net Forum: “The NWCB believes fiber tapes are best with veneer plaster and hot (setting type) joint compounds only. Fiber tape is good for patches when you have to get in and out and avoid several trips. Paper tapes have more shear resistance and are preferred and used by most drywall contractors in our area.”

Bob Mercer of CGC Inc. has this to say: “Technically, glass mesh tape is stronger than paper tape, but paper tape is more crack resistant than glass fiber. In the case of paper tape, approximately 30-lb./linear inch tensile force (pulling apart) is required to break the tape, glass-fiber tape requires approximately 70-lb./linear inch. However, glass-fiber tape will stretch like a rubber band about 0.03 inch before reaching maximum load whereas the paper tape reaches maximum load at zero elongation.

“Research has shown that hairline cracks or nail pops are visible at 0.01 inch of movement, one-third the maximum possible movement with glass-fiber and at one-third the load or 23-lb./linear inch. The performance of glass-fiber tape is improved if the tape is pre-stressed or stretched slightly during its application and embedment with the setting-type compounds. The pre-stressing is accomplished with the presetting because expands as it sets. This furnishes the movement necessary to stretch or pre-stress the tape; thus increasing its immediate resistance to load.

“In the case of shear resistance, paper tape wins hands down. If you are repairing static cracks that are not likely to move again, pick your poison; if the cracks are possibly dynamic, reach for the paper tape. We recommend using only setting-type compound to embed glass fiber and finish off with ready mix (air dry). Nobody has invented a more crack resistant joint reinforcement system than paper tape and setting compound. Ready mix is second.”

Proper use of caulking before painting is another article, but every paint manufacturer’s spec data sheets and product labels offer recommendations for caulking, and virtually all caulk products have spec data with similar information. The short answer is this: Prime, then caulk, then paint.

About the Author
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