Q How much overlap do you need on the existing board for an overlapping drywall patch that needs to be removable for access to a plumbing clean out? This is in a party wall. The hole size is about 6 inches by 6 inches. —K.E, via e-mail

A Odds are that this is a fire-rated wall. Party walls, area separation walls and fire walls are all terms used to describe walls constructed to prevent fire in one area from spreading to another, such as the wall between two townhouses or two stores in a strip mall. However, the model codes have different ideas about how this is best done, and each uses slightly different terminology to describe how such assemblies are to be constructed. You should contact your local building official for his interpretation of the prevailing code to determine whether such a penetration is allowed, and if it is, what firestopping measures may be required. Then you need to consult the gypsum panel manufacturer and see if it has a fire-rated design for this situation, assuming the building official allows the penetration.

Q I am interested in learning about PVC lath for stucco. How does it compare to standard galvanized diamond mesh lath? Is the installation the same as metal lath? Does the stucco key to it the same as metal lath? —L.V.

A SBCCI evaluation report no. 94182, states that the plastic lath may be used as a replacement for metal lath in exterior portland cement plaster applications on buildings of Type VI construction (wood frame, one hour, unprotected construction) provided several requirements are met.

Those requirements include installation of the plastic lath in accordance with ASTM C1063 over a substrate that consists of a minimum “strength or stiffness equal to or exceeding that provided by a fi inch insulation board having a flexural strength of 40 psi, a compressive strength of 15 psi, and a modulus of elasticity in flexure of 2500 psi.” Also, the wood studs should be spaced no more than 16 inches apart, and design wind pressures for wall surfaces cannot exceed 33 psf.

I know of only one producer of plastic lath (however, it’s polyolefin instead of PVC), and it is made by Plastic Components, Inc. in Miami. The company’s product information sheet asserts that the plastic lath offers several features for consideration over metal lath. These features include being 100 percent rust-proof; self-furred for positive keying; lighter in weight; it can be cut with a utility knife; it’s easier on the hands; it doesn’t crimp or kink; and it permits easy spreading of the plaster due to reduced trowel drag. The plastic lath can also be used for interior plastering or as a drainage mat for EIFS.

As for whether the stucco keys to the plastic lath as well as metal lath, that probably depends on who’s holding the trowel and what he’s used to. I hear there’s no consensus on which of the metal lath varieties works best, so I’d imagine the same holds true with the plastic lath.

Q In the second edition of AWCI’s Technical Manual 12A “Standard Practice for the Testing and Inspection of Field Applied Fire-Resistive Materials; an Annotated Guide,” the bond strength test requires cutting through the fireproofing around a 12 inch by 12 inch template before conducting the test. This requirement has been dropped in the third edition. Why?

A The second edition refers to the 1986 version of ASTM E-736, and the third edition is an update that refers to the “newer” 1992 edition of the same standard. The ASTM test procedure dropped a step when it was revised.

About the Author
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