We’ve got a job in New Jersey where one-hour fire-rated interior party- pre-cast concrete floor/ceiling. We intend to attach the runner to the concrete using power-actuated fasteners and fire-caulk the joint. Will this suffice? —R.M.

New Jersey currently uses the 1996 edition of BOCA’s National Building Code, which is not exactly overly specific regarding the head-of-wall condition. But if you dig into paragraph 709.7, it says, “Joints made in or between fire resistance rated assemblies shall be protected by a fire resistive joint system designed and tested to resist the spread of fire for a time period not less than the required fire resistance rating of the adjacent assemblies.” Section 709.7.1, item 5 reads, “Joint systems shall be tested at the maximum width for which they are designed. Joint systems designed to accommodate movement shall be expanded to the maximum joint opening width for which they are intended to function.” (Similar if not identical language can be found in the other codes.)

Working backward, once you have established the maximum gap the joint needs to extend to, you can then find a tested assembly in one of a number of ways. Easiest for me is to call the manufacturers of the products I hope to use, describe the assembly and ask for a copy of the listing, if they’ve got one. Second is to call the design professional and request the listing. The last resort is to thumb through the listings of the test labs and hope to stay awake until you find the desired design.

So, to answer the original question, if you find a design using the fire-rated caulk that will accommodate the specified movement (it was three-quarters of an inch in this instance), then yes, you can. I’d start by calling the caulk manufacturer.

The company I work for supplies hangs, tapes, floats and textures for drywall. For a few of our customers, we also provide a full service painting crew. Here is our dilemma: We provide turn-key drywall services to a builder who employs a totally different painting crew. This painting crew does not bother priming the finished drywall product. The extent of their painting of the walls is usually one spray coat and sometimes a re-roll of walls subject to critical lighting using normal wall paint—once again no primer is used. Yet we are the ones getting the callbacks for nail spots, seams and butt joints photographing through. Is there some documentation on the importance of a wall primer? —S.T

ASTM C840, section X3.3 states, “Because the porosity and texture of the gypsum board differs from that of the joint treatment, the surface shall be primed and sealed as may be required for the subsequent finish coats.” However, not all drywall primers are the same. Some finishes are sold as self-priming, others have a specified primer that should be used with them. Also, some colors hide better than others, even in off-whites. (Those on the yellow-red side are generally more transparent than those on the gray-brown side.) You might recommend that the builder have his painter try a better-hiding off-white.

About the Author
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