National EIFS Standard in the Works

By Don Procter

An industry performance standard for exterior insulation and finish systems, which will be included in Canada’s National Building Code, is a step closer to reality. To cover materials and application, the all-encompassing standard is expected to dramatically boost EIFS credibility Canada-wide. Guido Rapone, CEO of Toronto-based EIFS manufacturer Durabond Products Limited, is on the standing committee that is developing the national standard that is expected to get Underwriters’ Laboratory of Canada approval within six to 12 months. “It will be a document that puts everyone’s mind at ease that the materials and applications are correct and they meet a certain level performance,” Rapone says.

Rapone believes the standard, known as Can/ULC S716, will be unique in North America. It will require designers, applicators, manufacturers and inspectors to play by the same rules.

Coming to consensus on the makeup of the standard hasn’t been easy. To date there’s been more than two years of meetings among industry professionals to sort out what will be in and what will be excluded. Research and development efforts will help to identify a benchmark for acceptable performance.

The standard will be the cornerstone of the EIFS Council of Canada’s quality assurance program, which is just up and running. “It’s an excellent document that deals with all the substrates, all the performance requirements of the EIF system, and it addresses classifications, independent product performance to overall system performance for use over any substrate,” Rapone explains. The ULC committee developing the standard is comprised of EIFS manufacturers, building code officials, suppliers, R&D scientists and EIFS consultants.

On another front, the Canadian Construction Materials Centre is in the final stages of preparing an evaluation guide for wood substrates. Currently, the CCMC guide only evaluates steel stud and exterior gypsum applications. The new guide will serve as a reference for municipal building departments to help them identify different EIF systems, their components and how they can be applied to wood substrates for small buildings.

The document will explain how EIF systems can be applied in residential construction. Some Southern Ontario municipalities won’t allow the use of EIFS in residential. In one municipality building officials have indicated that EIFS can’t be applied to a wood substrate unless a product such as DensGlass or another gypsum or cement fiberboard product is applied to the substrate first.

Having EIFS included in a guide for wood substrates will represent a significant boon to the industry. “It’ll give comfort—give a means for the building officials to either accept or reject a particular EIFS product based on its performance over a wood substrate,” Rapone notes. There have been “misunderstandings” in some building departments about EIFS as a result of bad press on the West Coast of Canada, Vancouver in particular, where moisture infiltration has resulted in extensive damage to many buildings, some of which were clad in EIFS.

CCMC allows new technologies to the market by evaluating them to determine whether they meet the intent of applicable building codes, with technical guides playing a key role in this evaluation process. The technical guide outlines the performance criteria the product must meet and the testing procedures that must be followed.

The new guide will be provided to the manufacturer, which will be responsible for having the tests conducted in a laboratory recognized by CCMC. Once testing is completed, CCMC reviews the test results. If the product complies with the technical guide requirements, CCMC issues an evaluation report that includes detailed test results, a full description of the product, and its use and limitations. The evaluation report is then copyrighted.

About the Author
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