Q

I had weep screed on my stucco walls, but recently had leaking and water coming through the bottom of the wall. My contractor has now sealed and painted the walls with elastomeric paint so that they are solid at the bottom. Won’t this negate the effect of the weep screed? Is this an acceptable remedy, or am I likely to have new/other problems now? —via e-mail

A

When I first saw this question, I immediately knew that I was going to need to consult with my stucco gurus to ensure that all the variables were covered. So as is my habit when in need of expert input in a hurry, I posted this question on AWCI’s NetForum (www.awci.org/netforum/awci/a) and sent out an SOS via e-mail in hopes of getting some good input. This time I got more input than there’s room to print. Here are some (edited) excerpts:

Mark Amacher of the Consultants Group writes: “Yes [there are likely to be problems], if the weep screed was sealed. I would also ask what type of elastomeric was used.”

Morley Margolis of Honsador Lumber writes: “Generally water doesn’t go through a system. Water goes around a system. Therefore you must first check for proper flashings at the top of the wall and at the roof. Caulking around windows, doors and other penetrations must also be checked. The windows themselves must be checked to be sure that they are not leaking. Weep screed is installed primarily as a starting ledge for the stucco. It has drainage holes in it to let incidental moisture out. Elastomeric coatings are put on to cover small cracking in the finish. Any cracks over 1/32 of an inch should be filled before doing anything else to the wall. However, nothing will work until you find out where the water is coming from.”

Darin Coats of the Western Wall and Ceiling Contractor’s Association’s Technical Service Information Bureau writes: “The purpose of the foundation weep screed is to counter-flash the transition at the sill plate of the wall to the slab or curb it sits on. Additionally, the weep screed provides a path by which water can flow out of the plaster wall, The location of the weep screed is very important; the 3 1/2-inch vertical flange leg must bridge the connection of the slab and sill plate. Per the Uniform Building Code, this screed will be located a minimum of 4 inches above dirt or a minimum of 2 inches above paved areas. The dimension is measured from the leading edge of the screed, where the stucco stops. Install the screed first, then the building paper being sure to cover the 3 1/2-inch vertical flange leg.”

Frank Guidera of Performance Exteriors writes: “You are correct that by sealing the holes up, the water cannot weep. I would like to know where the water is coming in. It sounds like an improper installation of the barrier, which means that it probably doesn’t overlap the flange of the weep screed. . . . As far as the elastomeric coating, I would question the reason for that all together. If you have water leaking behind the system, paint won’t fix it.”

Walt Pruter, president of the International Institute of Lath and Plaster, writes: “Prior to including requirements for Foundation Weep Screeds in the 1975 Building Code, many buildings built on slabs-on-grade and clad with portland cement plastered exterior walls experienced water intrusion problems at the muddsill. . . . The foundation weep screed also prevents plaster from being directly applied to the footings or foundations where it could create a dam that directs water in the plaster back under the weather barrier and into the building. In an appropriate thickness, elastomeric coatings help bar external moisture from penetrating through the plaster membrane—but the elastomeric also retards the escape of moisture that entered the construction by percolating up through slabs or by circumventing flashing and sealants where plaster abuts other materials or has open penetrations.

About the Author
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