Contractor Completes First EIFS Job in 13 Weeks

No Problems, No Complaints in Mobile, Alabama

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Every time an exterior systems contractor bids a job and makes the usual promises to the owner, general contractor and architect, there are a predictable number of “Murphy’s Law” obstacles that will work against him.

But depending upon the owner requirements, some of the usual obstacles can be accommodated in the original scheduling (such as bad weather, delayed schedules by other subcontractors, worker shortages). On the other hand, unless the project is safely ahead of schedule, other less predictable obstacles are harder to deal with—incorrect or late material shipments, product inconsistencies or even on-the-job application problems.

And if you’re a relatively new exterior systems contractor to a particular market and the job is in itself one of the largest of its type in the Southeast with a near record-breaking construction schedule (and not dismissing that it’s your first application of a particular system), there isn’t much room for error, let alone Murphy’s Law. Ask AWCI member Damrich & Howard Coatings of Mobile, whose primary business for 11 years has been marine contracting.

Using SUREWALL® SBC Exterior Insulation System, Damrich & Howard Coatings, along with Commercial Coatings of Northwest Florida (Pensacola), met the challenge in only three months without any major delays except for daily afternoon showers. The 490,000 sq. ft. “power strip shopping center” Mobile Festival Centre in Mobile, AL, opened November 5 with fanfare only rivaled by the Centre’s size itself.

Somewhat horseshoe-shaped, the new Mobile Festival Centre is a...
Mobile is one of a growing number of areas now requiring mechanical fasteners for exterior insulation system installation.

massive open-air shopping complex of 77 stores, with future plans for seven outlot buildings, totaling an additional 15,000 square feet. The Centre’s smooth-finish “oyster white” exterior, contrasted against blue metal walkway canopies, red reveal molding and festive-color signage, successfully unifies the design of this complex—an accomplishment in itself, considering the magnitude.

The term “power center,” according to owners C.F. Halstead Developers, Montgomery, AL, aptly describes the collective drawing power of its key anchor tenants—Safeway’s Save-N-Pack, Ross Dress For Less, Circuit City, Marshall’s and Wal-Mart—and the emerging concept in strip center shopping. Halstead’s Vice President of Construction Bill Fuller calls the Mobile Festival Centre “the flagship” of this new concept.

The Centre’s 65-acre site, originally a swamp area, was cleared in October 1985. Standard footings were poured after the majority of the site was surcharged up to six feet in areas and allowed to compact for several months, according to Project Architect Glenn Golson, Architecture +, Monroe, LA. Construction didn’t begin until February 1986.

Then after the steel-joisted girder and framing system was erected, application work of the exterior insulation system began in early July 1986. The 27,048 sq. ft. Ross store’s 15,000 sq. ft. exterior wall system was completed in four weeks, and, according to Pat Murphy, president of Commercial Coatings (AWCI member), Ross’ exterior systems contractor, it represented for his eight-worker crew “one of the quickest applications for the amount of square footage we’ve ever handled.”

This particular system utilizes a two-step procedure—an acrylic-modified base coat is trowelled over EPS board and followed by either a spray or roller-applied elastomeric membrane finish coat.

Construction prior to exterior insulation system installation.  

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Nearly 2100 gallons of the elastomeric finish coat, was used by the two major exterior systems contractors, Commercial Coatings Contractors of Northwest Florida (Pensacola) and Damrich & Howard Coatings (Mobile, Alabama).

The exterior insulation system for Mobile Festival Center was installed in approximately 13 weeks. This particular system utilizes a two-step procedure—an acrylic-modified base coat is trowelled over EPS board and followed by either a spray or roller-applied elastomeric membrane finish coat.

Damrich & Howard installed the rest of the Centre’s exterior application, except for the Wal-mart store. Their 25-30 person crew finished the job in approximately 13 weeks. In all, both contractors together applied approximately 180,000 square feet of the SUREWALL® System.

Mobile, AL is one of the growing number of areas now requiring mechanical fasteners for exterior insulation system installation. This particular Gulf Coast area itself is prone to high winds and occasional hurricanes. According to R.L. Scobey & Son (Nashville, TN), the general contractor responsible for all stores except the Ross Store (general contractor—A.O. Ward Construction, Mobile), this
The new 490,000 square foot Mobile Festival Centre in Mobile, Alabama required approximately 180,000 square feet of exterior insulation system was one more reason for specifying the mechanically-fastened, impact-resistant system.

"Wind load requirements for this area are 120 miles per hour for exterior insulation systems," stated Frank Tyree, Scobey’s project manager. To further meet Mobile’s energy requirements, 2-inch EPS board plus 3½-inch glass fiber insulation were also used with the system.

According to Scobey, an equivalency of 2,000 sq. ft. of exterior insulation system was installed per day. "To us, what was outstanding about the job, aside from the project’s success, is the hard-coat system’s overall cost-effectiveness and speed of installation. The exterior insulation system being lighter than masonry walls, helped cut construction costs. Its light weight also minimized the size of the grade beams required for the foundation," Tyree said.

Commercial Coatings’ Pat Murphy said he is already quoting at least half of his jobs today with hard-coat systems and that percentage could change as owners continue to require more durable systems to reduce their long-term maintenance costs. Steven Damrich and Sandy Howard, owners of Damrich & Howard Coatings, although new to exterior insulation systems, have already had a 100 percent success rate so far bidding with hard-coat systems.