

# EXTERIOR INSULATION TAKES A STAND

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**E**xterior insulation systems is one of the revolutionary trends in modern construction. Indeed, in the last twenty years, exterior insulation has come from nowhere to become a prominent factor in construction. Over an excess of a billion square feet of these materials have been applied since its introduction in 1969. A multitude of buildings from single family homes to multifamily buildings have been successfully clad with EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems). The reason for its success is simple. It answers so many questions concerning architectural flexibility and design. What other product can provide insulation, color, dimensional design as well as be used in renovation, in prefabricated curtain wall, and in new construction. Truly exterior insulation is a remarkable material and the success of this material is increasingly growing throughout the construction and architectural communities.

With success of this product, and with continued momentum of this success, it comes as no surprise that other industries would try to derail the success of exterior insulation in this country. For years one of the major discussions surrounding exterior insulation has been its performance in reference to fire. But why? Well, the facts are there have been fires with exterior insulation, but there has been no record of loss of life, or excessive property damage, as a result of the non performance of an exterior insulation system. When, in fact, if you evaluate fires that have occurred on the systems from a pure technical point of view you find that not only did the system perform properly, but performed remarkably well.

Millions of dollars have been spent in the area of fire testing concerning EIFS. I would dare say there aren't many other products that have been tested under fire conditions as much as EIFS. Every time a new fire test is developed the results

are the same, the system does not add or subtract to the fire characteristics of the substrate which it is applied to.

So why all the discussion about fire?

The competition in the EIFS industry recently has been putting out a lot of publicity about the "Manchester Fire", which took place some four years ago. The fire started in a brick building and a STO EIFS building was across an alley. Many competitors alleged the STO EIFS system did not perform according to industry fire standards, but in fact, it did perform properly.

There are some very obvious points which should be brought up. First, in the Manchester Fire the brick building was completely destroyed by flame. The STO EIFS building did not spread flames and it did not support the fire. Furthermore, the interior of the STO EIFS building was not damaged as a result of the fire, nor did its sprinkler system go off. The owner and his insurance company credited the system with reducing the building's damage. The brick building was destroyed, yet the building which was clad with the STO EIFS system withstood the fire with minimal damage.

There has been much written on the Manchester Fire. The fact is the system did perform according to previous testing. It did not prove to be a hazard nor has any EIFS building fire situations shown proof to be a hazard. But, why are we continuing to hear about the Manchester Fire, and the danger of fire concerning EIFS systems, when EIFS buildings that have been involved in fires have performed well and there has not been recorded one loss of life as a result of a fire containing EIFS? With over a billion square feet of exterior walls that is truly a remarkable statement. It is doubtful whether any type of construction cladding can make such a claim. If you look at it in this sense the truth is the fire characteristics of EIFS performs better under fire conditions than many

other systems.

But, we are continuing to have to fight these battles. This subject continues to be raised and discussed when in fact there was no substance to the allegations made about the Manchester Fire and untrue statements are being made about fire hazards of EIFS buildings.

STO Industries has carefully researched this and has filed a federal lawsuit against numerous defendants involved in what is believed to be an antitrust and unfair trade practice as a result of conspiracy to perpetuate untrue statements by competitors with competing wall systems against STO Industries and its EIFS product. The defendants in the case listed which was filed on April 25, 1989, are the Brick Institute of America, Prestressed Concrete Institute, Minnesota prestressed Association, the Portland Cement Association, Jack L. Crowder, Richard W. Bletzacker, Charles N. Farley, and the Hera Corporation. The basis of this lawsuit is to seek recovery against those who continue to publicize the EIFS exterior insulation does not perform as it is supposed to. The defendants have tried unsuccessfully to this point to discredit the efforts of EIFS by using fire as a tactic to scare building owners, architects, and code officials from the use of exterior insulation. Obviously, these competitors have the most to lose in the growth of exterior insulation.

It is now the time for the exterior insulation industry to stand up' and be heard. We have a successful and proven track record, and one that has proven through a 20 year period will perform as well as any other exterior cladding. This lawsuit is the first time a line of defense has been drawn on behalf of the exterior insulation industry and it is our hope this will end the foolishness and the questions of unfounded allegations about the performance of our systems.

