Drywall with the Appearance of Paneling

By Kathleen Smallwood

Introduced as SoftForms Drywall® three years ago, Pittcon’s Fresco™ gypsum board gives the appearance of traditional paneling. Conventional drywall techniques and tools are used, but the pattern debossed into the surface makes some simple advance planning of the layout necessary. Careful planning can result in saving both time and material installation.

Three panels are available: wainscot (32" x 48"), upper wall (64" x 48") and ceiling (48" x 48"). All sheets have been designed for installation on wood or metal framing spaced 16” on center. The flat borders surrounding the “raised panel” areas provide space for attachment with drywall screws. All sheets have recessed edges for receiving tape and joint compound for finishing. These products carry a one-hour fire rating.

Installation Procedures

1. Check each wall with a carpenter’s level. Square and true up any surfaces out of plumb with shim material. A true surface will make your installation easier and better looking.

2. Do a measurements take-off and prepare a layout.

3. Determine how many full sheets and partial sheets will fill out the area.

4. Determine the most economical cuts to prevent waste. Use partial sheets as end fillers where possible.

5. Spaces remaining at each end of the wall may be completed by:
   a). cutting a patterned sheet to it and simply mudding over the last cut pattern, or
   b). cutting a filler piece from 1/2 or 5/8” gypsum wallboard.

6. Use a sharp drywall knife and make repeated cuts on the face of the sheet. Break from back and cut to separate. (Handle the product with care. The reduced sheet thickness in the debossed areas is subject to damage if the sheets are flexed. Carry sheets vertically rather than flat.)

7. Use a small drywall saw to cut holes for switches, outlets, etc.

8. Carefully position the first full sheet according to your layout and fasten in place. Use drywall screws rather than nails to minimize patching.

9. Continue installation of adjoining sheets by aligning debossed pattern with the debossing on the previous sheets. Small corrections may be necessary due to slight manufacturing variations in the width of each sheet and in the pattern to edge distance.

(Note: Always maintain a 4” measurement between debossed panels).

10. Add the remaining filler pieces at each end of the wall to complete the surface.

11. Proceed with taping and filling joints. Use conventional 12” wide tape. Press this deep into the compound with a 2” knife to prevent its extending beyond the recessed edges.

12. Use a 3-1/2” to 4” wide knife to fill the joint. The number of coats to finish may vary. Best results have been achieved with ready mix joint compound. Clean up any spillover while still wet.

13. Lightly sand to fair all joints.

Residential application of SoftForm panels.
**Finishing and Painting**

The installed sheets should be primed with a quality sealer. Touch up any small surface irregularities with spackle. Spray finishing with flat or satin paint produces the most professional results. Careful application with a roller and brush is also acceptable. Primer and finish coats should be of a type normally used on drywall (gypsum board).

**Repairs**

If the finished wall is damaged in the area of the debossed patterns, repair with ornamental plaster techniques. Damaged flat surfaces may be simply spackled and sanded prior to repainting.

Every situation is different, and there are bound to be special situations which are not covered. Further information is available upon request.