Servicing the Growth of Our Industry

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The exterior insulated finish systems (EIFS) industry has experienced tremendous growth annually for a number of years. Yet it has been reported by EIFS manufacturers and contractors that the industry’s growth is often limited due to the number of trained EIFS applicators available.

It is obvious that growth is good for our industry. A larger industry can better fight the kind of opposition we recently experienced from our competitors during the code hearings. However, the growth of the industry is and should be dependent on the number of trained EIFS applicators.

Quality is a key to the industry’s growth. As long as we provide quality EIFS systems, our customers (architects, developers and home owners) will have confidence in our industry, and this will produce repeat business. The key to quality is to have trained EIFS applicators.

To provide our industry with quality applicators we must provide generic training. Each of the EIFS manufacturers should have training available for contractors who use their products. But generic training, which will show workers how to apply EIFS systems in general, is needed. One month your workers might be applying an EIFS system with training provided by that manufacturer, but next month they may be working on another job with another manufacturer’s brand. Generic training will also produce a united industry which code agencies can depend upon for quality installations.

In 1991, forecasters are projecting declines in construction. The EIFS industry, however, is not dependent solely upon growth in construction in order to grow itself. Due to the advantages of EIFS, the industry has gained market share of exterior wall construction. Refurbishing is adding to the uses of EIFS for exterior covering. In addition, although commercial construction is a large percentage of the industry’s volume, the residential market is also providing many growth opportunities. New sheathing has been used in residential construction which allows EIFS applicators to be more competitive.

You might ask, “Where is this great demand for applicators?” Your crews are not busy and you don’t see the need for training more applicators. Many contractors have learned that they must work as hard as they can when construction is strong because a slow period will come. And, when that slow period comes, they must work as hard as they can to get organized and prepare for that time when construction is again strong. Therefore, whether your business is booming or things are sort of slow, training applicators can be a benefit.

Contractors abroad have turned down work due to the lack of trained EIFS applicators. They often train their own applicators, which is a costly expense and burden.

In addition to helping companies train applicators already working, an effective generic EIFS training program can help attract new people to the industry. We can’t leave the task of introducing bringing new people into the industry to our schools. High schools and vo-tech schools are not aware of the job opportunities available with EIFS. We all know that becoming an EIFS applicator can be a rewarding career opportunity. We as an industry need to inform young men and women of these opportunities.

The Technical Committee of the Exterior Insulation Manufacturers Association (EIMA) has been working with AWCI’s Technical Committee #7 to complete an EIFS applicator training manual. The manual will cover such topics as an introduction to the trade; safety; trade math; introduction to blueprints; product identification; application; and repairs. The manual could be used by contractors, vo-tech schools, local AWCI chapters, etc. to train quality applicators.
This training manual should be available by the middle of 1991.

Those who have used this EIFS training manual will enter our industry as apprentices, but they will have the basic knowledge of how the systems are installed. This training session will also provide young people with the opportunity to decide whether or not a career in the EIFS industry is for them. It is certainly better that they find this out on their time rather than on your payroll.

In preparation for the availability of this manual, AWCI/EIMA needs your response not only to confirm the need for such a manual but to indicate where the need is the greatest. If your company or organization would have a need for such a training manual and program, circle #160 on the Reader Service Card in this magazine and mail it in. This will allow AWCI/EIMA to contact your firm or organization and plan to meet your specific needs for training.

About the Author:

Michael R. Irving has been in the EIFS industry for 14 years (four years as a plasterer, four years as director of technical service for KRT Corporation in Indianapolis, and six years with Simplex Products Division. At Simplex he has been manager of product development from 1984-86, product manager from 1986-87, operations manager from 1987-89 and manager of technical services from 1990 to the present.