C.A.R.E

Care And Restoration of Exteriors
Program Encourages Expanded Business Opportunities

By Steven J. Collins

Whether the restoration involves cleaning, repairing or recoating, the birth of this program gives the contractor the ammunition to completely care for and restore buildings. In order to take advantage of this market, however, many contractors may need to change the way they do business and learn a new complimentary trade. As each contractor weighs the pros and cons of entering this market, one thing is sure, the more qualified plasterers there are in the EIFS restoration business, the brighter the future of the EIFS industry.

CS Stucco and Plaster of North Jersey is one contractor who has tapped this ripe market. Lonnie Harrell, president of CS, has given his team the time to learn how to apply the materials featured in the program, such as roll-on elastomeric coatings. The company’s success is evidenced by its anticipated formation of a care and restoration division to handle the increased business.

In addition to restoration business generated from contacts with building contractors, Harrell believes it is to a plastering contractor’s advantage to analyze the EIFS buildings in one’s area and, if appropriate, bring restoration solutions to their owners’ attention. Often building owners do not pay close attention to their buildings’ exteriors, and it is an opportunity for the EIFS contractor to work with owners to suggest a little preventive maintenance can add years to the life of a building. The message is that, by taking care of the stains, cracks and other minor problems now, costly repairs can be avoided in the future.

Many owners don’t understand that years of harsh weather can take their toll, even on the best of exterior surfaces. Exposure to extreme heat, cold and ultraviolet rays can sometimes lead to sealant deterioration or minor surface cracking. Building exteriors also face many natural enemies that can cause damage. Air pollution, sun, acid rain, water and ultraviolet radiation attack EIFS buildings year after year.

Harrell stresses that, in order to guarantee the proper restoration or upgrade of an EIFS building, it is vital that an EIFS plastering contractor be involved. The plasterer knows the technology on the wall and is the best person to answer questions or offer advice on the materials that
should be used to properly restore an EIFS building. Once the methods are identified, the experienced EIFS contractor is the logical choice to handle all aspects of the restoration job, including filling cracks, matching textures, caulking and, yes, coating.

The C.A.R.E. program identifies three areas of EIFS restoration: surface preparation, coating options and decorative improvements.

In many cases, a straight, flat EIFS wall can be upgraded or modernized to give the building and its owner an enhanced image.

Surface Preparation
The first step that needs to be taken prior to any EIFS restoration work is to thoroughly clean the affected areas. Commercially available cleaning solutions should be diluted in water and sprayed onto the surface with high pressure power washing equipment. This will remove general dirt and accumulated pollutants that can act as bond breakers.

Isolated strains caused by mud, grease and grime may be removed by gently scrubbing with commercially available stain removal solutions. For mold, mildew and algae removal, commercially available mildewcides are recommended.

Once cleaned, if the building’s exterior is exhibiting surface cracks larger than 1/32 in., an acrylic, elastomeric patching compound should be applied with a brush or knife to form a permanent, flexible seal. All loose materials must be removed from the crack prior to application, and the crack should not only be clean but dry, too. Dynamic joints, or moving cracks, should have an expansion joint installed and should be filled with a recommended urethane sealant.

If the EIFS is failing due to improper installation, a new system will probably need to be applied in the damaged areas. This activity also requires the expertise and experience of a contractor to apply the EIFS, match existing texture and cut expansion joints if necessary.

Coating Options
When a building requires color, the bridging of hairline cracks and protection from the elements, owners should be alerted to the availability of highly flexible elastomeric coatings. Applied by using a brush, roller or sprayer, the finish’s elastomeric binder bridges hairline cracks, effectively forming a colorful, weather-resistant membrane over the exterior finish.

Often times, an existing EIFS building only requires a change in
Decorative Improvements

In many cases, a straight, flat EIFS wall can be upgraded or modernized to give the building and its owner an enhanced image. This can be achieved by fabricated shapes and architectural details from the insulation board component of an EIFS system. The EIFS contractor has the skill to bring all these restoration ideas to the wall.

The restoration market will continue to show great promise into the next century. Likewise, the EIFS industry will continue to expand, and EIFS building owners will become better educated on building care and restoration. The EIFS contractor needs to ask the question, “Am I in a position to take advantage of this business opportunity?”

About the Author:
Steven James Collins, marketing manager-commercial, for Dryvit Systems, Inc., West Warwick, RI, is responsible for marketing the EIFS manufacturer’s systems and products as well as developing new market opportunities for the company. Prior to his position at Dryvit, Collins was vice president of sales and marketing for Insul/Crete Co. Inc., Madison, WI, and regional sales manager at Sencon Systems, Inc., Chicago, IL. He is a graduate of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.