One of the many outstanding features of living in the United States of America is our inalienable right to maintain freedom of choice. We can choose to eat fish or foul, buffalo or tofu, whole wheat or rye, vanilla ice cream or cookies and cream. We can drive cars, motorcycles or...
bicycles. We can choose brown shoes or black, white shirt or blue. We also are free to choose the method we will use to secure rigid insulation boards to a substrate within an exterior insulation and finish system.

One may choose to adhesively attach with any of the scores of quality adhesives available for installation over a myriad of approved substrates, or decide on positive mechanical attachment with no adhesives. Another increasingly popular variation is the “belt and suspenders” route, which combines both adhesive and mechanical attachment and provides the “best of both worlds.” Whatever the preference, for whatever the reason, as long as the EIFS manufacturer says okay, the choice is yours.

Adhesives have been successfully utilized within EIF systems for many years, on literally billions of square feet, and have always been the primary means of attachment. Projects of all sizes have been adhered to a disparate number of substrates all over the world, and they have withstood both the test of time and the rigors of environmental and weather conditions. Quite honestly, adhesives work great. But here is where the question of choice comes in. Top-quality, positive mechanical fastening systems provide attractive alternatives to applicators for many EIFS applications. They are fast, reliable and versatile. They can be used to fasten insulation boards to virtually any substrate: wood and steel framing, sheathing and siding such as plywood, oriented strand board or metal, as well as block, concrete and brick.

The availability of mechanical fastening systems has enabled EIFS to be used cost-effectively on more and more projects. For instance, costly and extensive wall preparation can be eliminated. It is no longer necessary to remove paint by archaic blasting methods, or install metal lath over the paint prior to the EIFS application. Applying EIFS over metal or wood, which once almost required building a new structure, is now accomplished in a fraction of the time with a tremendous reduction in cost.

Since foam application can be mechanically fastened in virtually any weather condition, building seasons can now be extended to 12 months. Gravity slumping is equalized on soffits and starter strips and, because there is no curing time, rasping, mesh and base coat can be applied immediately after the foam is attached. There also is a growing number of EIFS projects incorporating building wraps and/or 15-pound felt within their exterior wall assemblies, thereby making mechanical fastening a virtual necessity and again allowing EIFS to be used on a greater number of building projects.

Alternatives abound in the application of an EIF system. Choices of color and texture are seemingly endless. A variety of mesh weights is available for specific impact-resistance requirements. There are adhesives and base coats for many different applications, as well as polymer-based, polymer-modified and polyisocyanurate EIFS from which to choose. There are various methods of attachment, and the acceptance of EIFS within the construction industry is still ascending. With all these things in mind, count yourself lucky; EIFS is still growing, and you truly do have freedom of choice.

About the Author

the Wind-lock Corporation, Leesport, Pa. He has been in many facets of the