In June, the North Carolina Building Code Council reviewed a proposed code performance and testing protocol for drainable EIFS. For a variety of reasons, however, the council did not approve the language used in the proposal and sent the issue back to the committee for further review. In view of this move, United States Gypsum Company contends that the next logical step for the EIFS industry is to develop a consensus for a drainable EIFS code utilizing independent testing bodies, such as the American Society for Testing and Materials.

“We feel that the industry could be putting itself at risk by not attaining recognition from a standard group prior to gaining code approval.”

“While it’s unfortunate that we could not get the appropriate code language approved for drainable EIFS in North Carolina, we feel that developing a consensus among independent standards organizations, such as ASTM, is really the only logical way to go,” says Jim Reicherts, product manager of exterior...
systems for United States Gypsum Corporation, which is headquartered in Chicago.

The recommended test protocols were developed by the EIFS Industry Members Association, which also included input from USG Corporation.

“We believe that the performance criteria and language included in the recommended North Carolina code was satisfactory,” Reicherts says. “We are concerned, though, that the testing protocols for drainage that were called for in the code procedures were not reviewed or approved by an independent organization, such as ASTM.”

“We feel that the industry could be putting itself at risk by not attaining recognition from a standards group prior to gaining code approval,” Reicherts says. “The bottom line is that we must reestablish credibility with our customers—namely builders and homeowners who have our systems installed on their homes.

“The only way to accomplish that is to be absolutely certain that the standards and testing criteria we develop ensure that our systems perform without failure, both in the testing labs and in real life.”

Since fall 1995, when extensive moisture-damage problems were discovered on EIFS homes in Wilmington, NC., USG Corporation has invested large sums of money and countless man-hours to research and test both “barrier” and water-managed exterior systems. The company was the first EIFS manufacturer to completely stop marketing its “barrier” EIFS.

USG Corporation is offering its customers system testing protocols that build on the groundwork initiated by EIMA.

“Our testing procedures, which we’ve had in place for several months, are the first in the industry to offer building inspectors and design professionals the ability to quantify the maximum drainage rate of any water-managed system,” Reicherts says. “The procedure also tests moisture content levels of water-sensitive sheathings used in the systems.”

One of the benefits of the USG testing protocol is that it permits specifiers to estimate the amount of water they believe will breach the exterior system.
“We have received very positive feedback from building inspectors and code officials on our testing procedures.” — Jim Reicherts

(based on local climate conditions), and then compare that rate to the maximum drainage rate of the specified water-managed system.

The USG testing protocol has been accepted by SBCCI for use in evaluating drainage of EIFS claddings. It is also being reviewed by the Drainage and Water Management Task Force Group of ASTM Committee E6.58, whose role is to develop consensus standards for the testing and performance standards for EIFS.

“We have received very positive feedback from building inspectors and code officials on our testing procedures,” Reicherts maintains.

"As proposed for the EIMA test standard, USG has submitted its procedure to ASTM for review. We feel that achieving independent expert consensus of either our testing protocols or EIMA’s testing protocols, or some combination thereof, is the only logical goal for the industry at this point.”

About the Author
Marty Duffy is the marketing communications manager for United States Gypsum Company, Chicago.