A s industry experts continue to debate the practicality and viability of barrier exterior insulation and finish system construction, water-managed stucco-look systems are gaining popularity among exteriors contractors. A house currently under construction in Illinois illustrates why these systems are considered by many to be the wave of the future for stucco-look exteriors.

The house is being built for John and Barb McKim, owners of several grocery stores throughout Southern Illinois and Indiana. Their new 10,600-square-foot house—reminiscent of a Mediterranean villa—stands proudly on a hill along Highway 50, west of Lawrenceville, Ill. Noticeable to passersby is the house’s stucco-look exterior, which is the DUROSCREEN 1000 Water-Managed Exterior Finish System from USG.

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Outside the McKim home near Lawrenceville, Ill., is the crew from Richardville’s Drywall: (l to r) Michael Richardville, Jack Richardville, Mike Richardville, J.R. Morrison and George Wells.
“If there’s one thing I like about this system,” says Mike Richardville of Richardville’s Drywall, Vincennes, Ind., “it’s that the exterior looks absolutely fantastic.”

But besides looking great, the DUROSCREEN 1000 system is designed and built to resist damage resulting from moisture intrusion.

It features a water-durable substrate (DUROCK Cement Board), applied over a weather-resistive barrier. The weather-resistive barrier functions as an effective drainage plane, ensuring that any incidental moisture that penetrates into the wall cavity will not reach framing, sheathing and other water-sensitive building components.

Additionally, the system features flashing and weeping details to provide for quick egress of intruding moisture. The joints of the cement board panels are treated with mesh tape, and a portland cement basecoat is applied to minimum 3/32-inch thickness over the entire cement board surface. The walls are then topped with USG Exterior Textured Finish, an aggregate polymer stucco-look texture.
A plastic sports bottle was used to float finish coat within the curved grooves of exterior foam moldings.

Donovan & Donovan Associates, A.I.A., modified plans purchased by the McKims from a Florida home builder. "This stucco system had a very good reputation, which is why we used it."

**A BOOST FOR BUSINESS**

Because water-managed exteriors offer the same aesthetics as barrier EIFS and provide protection against moisture intrusion, they offer contractors a solid selling plus.

Richardville’s Drywall, for example, has been in business for 14 years. The company maintains nine full-time employees year-round and works with two dozen additional subcontractors. Four years ago, the drywall contracting firm

In fact, Richardville’s Drywall has become the largest exterior contractor in Vincennes, Ind., and Lawrenceville, Ill. The firm also claims a significant share of contracts in Evansville, Ind. and Northern Kentucky.

“USG provided us with great field support, and it really wasn’t that hard to learn about the systems,” Richardville says. “We put a lot of time and pride into our work.”

Richardville’s work at the McKim house shows why the company has fast become a dominant player in exterior stucco-look finishes. The house was not an easy application since it features numerous corners, curved walls, long spans and high soffits. Most houses with stucco-look exteriors use wood or vinyl for the soffits and facia. That was not true at the McKim home. Cement board was used on all exterior surfaces.

“This house has Durock around it entirely,” Richardville says. “We had to put vents in the cement board soffits, and that was hard to do because of the height of the eaves and the unevenness of the ground.”

**MOLDINGS A FORMIDABLE TASK**

Architectural molding applied throughout the exterior posed a challenge. The foam moldings were easy to install around windows and doors, but finishing them with the right texture was another story. The homeowner had chosen a relatively coarse texture known as an “accent” finish, which was to be used throughout the exterior.

However, using the coarse texture on the small crevasses and curves around windows and other areas of the house was next to impossible. Because Richardville prefers the quality of trowel applications, he opted against a spray application for these areas.

Other contractors might have switched to a fine texture, but not Richardville. He searched for an unconventional float.

“I remembered I had been given a plastic sports bottle at a golf outing,” Richardville says. “I cut off the top, took it to the jobsite, and it fit the molding grooves just perfectly.”

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Another challenge came in texturing the ceiling above the swimming pool.

The plans called for creating an oblong-shaped dome ceiling. Richardville describes it as “a football cut in half and turned upside down.” The problem was the crew couldn’t get the cement board to conform to the severe concave framing.

They opted for lath and plaster system, cut into the curved surface, so Richardville was back seeking another homemade float.

Standard floats couldn’t be used in the finish application because they cut into the curved surface. Cereal bowls and other objects didn’t work either, giving the contractor “countless sleepless nights.”

He tried cereal bowls and a number of other rounded objects, but none of the items had the curvature and flexibility needed to float the finish properly.

“There were countless sleepless nights during that time,” Richardville remembers. “We could have just sprayed a fine finish, but then it would...
not have matched the walls. I didn’t want to do that.”

Then, the solution came to me one night. It was a Frisbee. The slightly curved surface of a Frisbee has a slight give, enough to float coarse texture on a concave surface.

Indeed, completing the exterior of the McKim home was one of the biggest challenges Richardville has ever faced. But everyone involved agrees that the final product was worth all the effort we put in. The exterior looks really fantastic.

The home was not an easy application since it features numerous corners, curved walls, long spans and high soffits, and cement board was the substrate used on all exterior surfaces.

“A lot of time and materials are spent doing a house like this,” Richardville says. “But it pays off when you get calls for other jobs.”

About the Author
Mark Johnson is a public relations consultant for USG Corporation, Chicago.