

EIMA RESPONDS TO ACME BRICK ATTACK

The following is the EIMA response to an e-mail that was sent to more than 150 building and government official e-mail addresses throughout Texas. Fortunately, one address on the list belonged to EIMA member Phil Amodeo, CAE, Executive Director for the Texas Lathing & Plastering Contractors Association.

Phil knew immediately that this was an unwarranted attack by the brick industry. It's an underhanded attempt to damage the reputation of the EIFS industry in connection with the Monte Carlo hotel fire in Las Vegas. The writer of the e-mail is John Swink, a technical services engineer at Acme Brick in Fort Worth, Tex., who is responding to an Acme representative's query about cities that use EIFS as an exterior wall cladding material and if he "had any bad experience with EIFS?"

I have posted both the original Swink e-mail followed by our response to the same addressees. In the meantime, Phil Amodeo is doing his own stern reply on behalf of the TLPCA, and I encourage you to do the same on behalf of your company or organization.

This is just the type of tactic that demonstrates the lengths to which a threatened competitor will attempt to derail the significant advances we have made and continue to make in our industry.

E-MAIL FROM ACME BRICK DATED FEBRUARY 22, 2008

From: John Swink [mailto:jswink@brick.com]

Sent: Friday, February 22, 2008 3:03 PM

To: Ravi Shah

Cc: Removed for the sake of brevity.

Subject: RE: EIFS

Ravi,

I cannot speak for building inspection departments, but the history of EIFS (ETICS outside US) is that it was developed in Europe as a way of insulating the many uninsulated concrete and masonry buildings there after WWII. It was intended to be installed ONLY on concrete or masonry. This is important because the two biggest risk factors for EIFS/ETICS are water penetration and fire. Water penetration is not normally an issue with EIFS if it is adhesive bonded to masonry or concrete, because any leaks are met with a continuous concrete surface which will stop the leak and disburse any dampness that reaches the surface. Concrete and masonry are also not damaged by moisture as light-framed walls are.

Fire is always a risk with EIFS, since both the foam and the polymeric coatings used on most installations are combustible. The Monte Carlo hotel fire last month in Las Vegas is a good example of the fire risk of this cladding material.

http://www.iccsafe.org/cgi-bin/ultimatebb.cgi?ubb=get_topic:f=4;t=009452

http://www.ratevegas.com/blog/2008/01/monte_carlo_fir.html

Even with concrete and masonry backup walls there is still a risk because fire can breach window openings and jump from floor to floor, especially on high-rise apartments and hotels. I have a presentation showing dozens of ETICS fires in China that I received at the ASTM E06 EIFS subcommittee meeting in Tampa last fall. The presenter was a Chinese engineer who has developed a less combustible form of ETICS, for which he was seeking acceptance under the ASTM EIFS standards. The presentation shows many buildings where the fires raced up the facade at horrific speeds. The buildings were all concrete and masonry, which gives 2-4 hour fire rated walls, but fire can still breach the windows.

Installing this cladding on light-framed walls greatly increases the fire hazard, because steel stud walls can completely collapse in a fire and wood studs will add fuel to the fire once the gypsum sheathing is breached.

There are several restrictions you might consider, if you do decide to allow EIFS cladding:

- *Do not allow EIFS to be installed over wood framed walls.*
- *Do not allow EIFS cladding within ten feet of the ground to reduce the risk from grass and brush fires.*
- *Do not allow EIFS with fifty feet of trash receptacles, flammable liquid storage, or other known fire hazards.*
- *Only allow EIFS to be installed over concrete or masonry surfaces.*
- *If you allow EIFS over steel stud walls, require a two-hour fire rated sheathing on the outside of the wall, and also require a continuous membrane waterproof drainage plane to be applied before the cladding is installed.*

Obviously EIFS is a cladding that competes with brick, but I do not write this for that reason. I believe this is a major life safety and health issue that needs serious consideration.

*John Swink, PE
Acme Brick Company*

EIMA RESPONSE SENT FEBRUARY 27, 2008

I am writing on behalf of the EIFS Industry Members Association (EIMA) in response to an e-mail sent to you recently by John Swink of Acme Brick in Fort Worth, Texas. This one individual's opinion is not an accurate reflection of the safety, value and performance of Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) and contains numerous false and misleading statements. In fact, his statements are so cunningly worded, his examples are so patently misrepresented and his motivation to support the brick industry is so transparent, that we are compelled to reach the conclusion that his distortions are deliberate. The e-mail clearly only serves the brick industry's goal to disparage a competing product.

Before addressing the misrepresentations of the e-mail, please be advised that earlier this week recognition of EIFS was voted unanimously for the International Residential Code. While companion hearings are going on at this time on the commercial side, it is expected that EIFS will be recognized in the IBC as well. National code bodies recognize the role EIFS have played in providing safe and durable cladding options in this country for the past 39 years.

Mr. Swink's e-mail starts by painting a false picture of the intended use of EIFS. EIFS has been proven since 1969 in the United States to be an effective cladding over all approved substrates. It was never intended to be installed only over concrete or masonry.

However, the most careless disregard for the facts in Mr. Swink's e-mail lies in his outrageously false and misleading claims with respect to fire safety. He points to a recent fire at the Monte Carlo casino in Las Vegas and fires in China as "evidence" of his fallacious claim.

First, regarding the recent fire at the Monte Carlo hotel in Las Vegas, any comment that EIFS spread the fire is false and reflects either ignorance of the nature of EIFS or ignorance of the actual facts of the fire, or both.

Immediately after the fire was reported, EIMA engaged a consultant who visited the site beginning the next day. The consultant also met with local building officials, fire marshals, members of the ATF and owner representatives. He is still actively engaged in evaluation of the fire on site.

It is essential to point out that the materials on the exterior of the wall that burned at the Monte Carlo have not yet been identified. Preliminary information indicates that the fire was not located at an EIFS exterior wall, but instead occurred in decorative foam plastic areas that may not be EIFS and may not be recognized fire tested materials. The fire was caused accidentally by improperly conducted welding activities on the roof. It is anticipated that future testing will be used to accurately identify the composition of the materials that were used and assess how their presence affected the accidental fire. Based on fire testing and the past performance of EIFS in building fires, the behavior of the Monte Carlo fire indicates that it was not EIFS. It is anticipated that testing now in progress will accurately identify the composition of the materials that were used on this exterior and then assess how they affected the fire.

Mr. Swink's China example is even more hollow. It intentionally omits the fact that China's construction market is well-documented for the use of substandard, counterfeit materials that may pose as legitimate, tested products but are actually only poor imitations of those products. It is almost certain that the buildings in question were clad with knock-off products that are in no way a valid comparison with legitimate EIFS, made and tested in the US for our market.

Conventional EIFS are fire-resistant. They are composed of a fire-retardant tested, polystyrene foam plastic insulation layer encapsulated in successive base and finish coats incorporating fiberglass mesh. EIFS has been proven in real world situations to perform as designed and tested. The fact that EIFS functions as a safe and durable building cladding has been long confirmed by fire testing conducted under test procedures promulgated by the National Fire Protection Association and through ASTM testing. EIFS have passed the ASTM E 119 Fire resistance test (for both 1 hour and 2 hour ratings); NFPA 268 for ignitability; UBC Standard 26-4 (formerly 17-6) Full Scale Multi-Story Fire Test; NFPA 285 (UBC 26-9) Intermediate Multi-Story Fire Test; ANSI FM 4880 Full Scale Multi-Story (corner test); and ASTM E 84 Surface Burning Characteristics.

EIFS components also should not be confused with superficially similar components having different origins and chemical properties. Certain materials that are not fire tested (e.g., polyurethane coated foam plastic shapes) may resemble EIFS, but are not EIFS systems. Such materials are constructed very differently and behave differently in fire situations. Most importantly, they are not recommended for use in building construction because they are not fire-resistant.

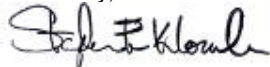
Because there are untested or inadequately tested materials that closely resemble the appearance of EIFS, it is of special concern to EIMA to emphasize that architects and developers should specify and use only fully fire-tested wall cladding materials such as EIFS.

Over the past decade, EIMA and its members have continuously stressed the importance of using only materials that are fire-tested and code-approved full EIF systems. EIFS has been used extensively for more than 40 years and EIFS has been recognized as being a superior exterior wall system in thermal and moisture tests conducted by Oak Ridge National Laboratories for the Department of Energy.

Finally, I ask that you to consider that this one individual's opinion needlessly invokes hysteria and fear. Mr. Swink's overt attempts to advance the brick industry's objectives should be dismissed as misrepresentations that are out of step with national code body activity and inaccurate in every way.

On behalf of the membership of EIMA, I urge you to visit www.eima.com for accurate, up-to-date information about EIFS performance benefits and testing results as it relates to moisture, fire and insulation.

Sincerely,



Stephan E. Klamke

Executive Director

EIFS Industry Members Association

EIFS INDUSTRY
MEMBERS
ASSOCIATION

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LET US HEAR FROM YOU

EIMA is your organization. Our commitment to you for 2008 is improved communication. We encourage you to bring to our attention any issues of concern for discussion.