

Dispelling Myths About Fire Safety and EIFS

EIMA Cautions Against Untested Materials That Can Be Mistaken for EIFS

Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) have been successfully used on more than 500,000 buildings for more than 40 years in the United States.

EIFS have been rigorously tested for their ability to effectively resist fire, as required by all U.S. model building codes, successfully passing required ASTM and NFPA tests. Experience has shown that properly installed EIFS systems achieve desired performance in actual fires.

Look For Untested Materials

EIFS can often be improperly confused with polyurethane-based coating or trim accessories that have been attached to the EIFS lamina. Although such non-EIFS materials superficially resemble EIFS, these materials are not EIFS and not part of the system subjected to fire testing.

Unfortunately, many untested materials that resemble EIFS can be mistaken for fire-tested, code-compliant EIFS. Such untested configurations and/or materials may fail to meet building code requirements.

EPS insulation used in noncombustible construction is traditionally attached to a gypsum board or concrete/masonry substrate. In a fire, these substrates are designed to act as a heat sink, slowing the temperature increase and delaying ignition. When the traditional EIFS substrate is removed, ignition of the EPS can occur more quickly and may result in flame propagation.

Base Coatings Key to Performance

The base coat and reinforcing mesh are designed to inhibit flame spread and also help to retard ignition by forming a protective barrier over the EPS. Substituting untested coatings such as polyurethane or polyurea for traditional EIFS base coat and finish may increase the flammability of these applications in a fire.

Any modification to a tested and approved design, e.g. use of polyurethane-based coating or trim accessories at the heads of wall penetrations and at horizontal terminations (expansion joints), should only be undertaken after appropriate fire test(s) have been conducted to verify that there will be no adverse affects on fire performance, and that building code fire safety requirements are met.

Learn More About EIFS and EIMA

Founded in 1981, the EIFS Industry Members Association (EIMA) is a national non-profit technical trade association comprised of leading manufacturers, suppliers, distributors and applicators involved in the exterior insulation and finish systems (EIFS) industry. For information, contact EIMA at 800-294-3462, elfsinfo@eima.com or visit www.eima.com.

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LET US HEAR FROM YOU

We encourage you to discuss and bring to our attention any issues of concern. We want to hear from you, and we are glad to discuss how EIMA can better serve you.