

# Homeowner's Guide to Maintenance and Inspection

Volume 2, Number 2  
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**SAFE & SOUND**  
**HOME INSPECTION**  
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## The Facts about the Exterior Insulation Finish System (EIFS)

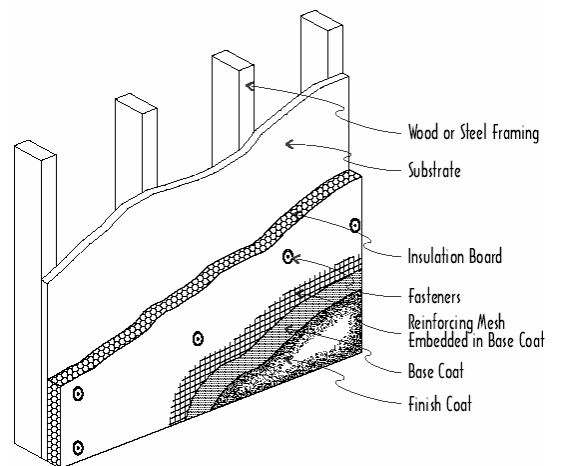
### “Synthetic Stucco”

#### Background

- EIFS, pronounced *eefs*, is an exterior cladding product composed of a multi-layered system of synthetic board and finish adhered to wood or gypsum sheathing. It is also called synthetic stucco. It has been in use in the U.S. for over 30 years. There are 250,000 homes that use EIFS.
- The use of EIFS is growing, particularly in commercial construction. It represents 2% to 4% of residential wall cladding.
- EIFS looks like regular hard stucco. To tell the difference, knock on it with your knuckles. It will feel a bit softer than traditional stucco and it will sound a little hollow. One may also identify EIFS by the existence of architectural details on the wall such as cornices, arches, cornerstones, etc.

#### Benefits of EIFS

- Because the insulating panels are made of polystyrene foam, they can easily be shaped into quoins, cornices, crown moldings or frieze boards, thus giving architects design freedom unavailable with other siding materials.
- EIFS provides insulating properties, boosting the R-value of the wall by as much as R-16.



#### Issues with EIFS

- If water penetrates EIFS it can get behind the substrate and rot the substrate and wall framing materials. Water can enter EIFS either because the system has been installed improperly, the system has been damaged, or the system has not been properly maintained. The traditional EIFS system does not allow for water to drain away once it has entered. New systems incorporate a moisture barrier on the sheathing to drain the moisture and have a weep capability which sheds the water.
- Not all EIFS homes have moisture problems. However, an EIFS-clad home may have problems that are not readily visible.
- The EIFS industry claims that problems with EIFS are due to improper installation; however installers claim that it is difficult to meet the manufacturers' stringent specifications for installation.
- EIFS has been the subject of class-action lawsuits by homeowners against manufacturers and builders.

#### What a Realtor Should Do

- Get information from the seller about any stucco on the home. Ask if it is EIFS. Ask if inspections or repairs have been done in the past.
- Recommend an inspection on any home. If the inspector identifies the EIFS wall cladding, suggest that the Buyer have a special EIFS inspection by a qualified EIFS inspector.

#### Further Information about EIFS

- EIFS Inspectors: <http://www.exterior-design-inst.com>

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## Further Information about EIFS - continued

- Realtor.org: <http://www.realtor.org/rmomag.nsf/pages/lawjan04>
- EIFS Alliance: <http://www.eifsalliance.com>
- National Association of Home Builders: <http://www.nahbrc.org> Search for the term EIFS
- EIFS Industry Members Association (EIMA): [http://www.eima.com/residential\\_eifs.htm](http://www.eima.com/residential_eifs.htm)

## Humor

### Accident Report

This one needs an introduction, so you won't be lost at the beginning. This man was in an accident at work, so he filled out an insurance claim. The insurance company contacted him and asked for more information. This was his response:

"I am writing in response to your request for additional information, for block number 3 of the accident reporting form. I put 'poor planning' as the cause of my accident. You said in your letter that I should explain more fully and I trust the following detail will be sufficient. I am an amateur radio operator and on the day of the accident, I was working alone on the top section of my new 80-foot tower. When I had completed my work, I discovered that I had, over the course of several trips up the tower, brought up about 300 pounds of tools and spare hardware. Rather than carry the now unneeded tools and material down by hand, I decided to lower the items down in a small barrel by using the pulley attached to the gin pole at the top of the tower. Securing the rope at ground level, I went to the top of the tower and loaded the tools and material into the barrel. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it tightly to ensure a slow decent of the 300 pounds of tools."

"You will note in block number 11 of the accident reporting form that I weigh only 155 pounds.

Due to my surprise of being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rather rapid rate of speed up the side of the tower. In the vicinity of the 40-foot level, I met the barrel coming down. This explains my fractured skull and broken collarbone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles deep into the pulley. Fortunately, by this time, I had regained my presence of mind and was able to hold onto the rope in spite of my pain. At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of tools hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel."

"Devoid of the weight of the tools, the barrel now weighed approximately 20 pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block number 11. As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the tower. In the vicinity of the 40-foot level, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for the two fractured ankles, and the lacerations of my legs and lower body. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of tools and, fortunately, only three vertebrae were cracked. I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the tools, in pain, unable to stand and watching the empty barrel 80 feet above me, I again lost my presence of mind. I let go of the rope..."



David Roos

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