

Stucco Inspections

If you are concerned that you may get “stuck” on stucco, we can help

About the Author

Kenn Enochs, the principal of KE Realty Services LLC, has personally provided real estate inspections, consulting and forensic investigations for 30 years. Over that period of time, he has performed over 14,000 building analysis in 17 different states. Based on this experience, he has discovered that most stucco problems (i) are due to moisture intrusion, particularly around through wall openings such as windows and doors and (ii) about 70% of the time, the problem areas can be repaired in a cost-effective manner without removing the whole system.

Synthetic Stucco

Beginning in the late 80's Kenn's company was a member of Employees Relocation Council. His relocation clients were DuPont, Rhone Poulenc, Bristol Myers, Rhodia, Johnson & Johnson, AT&T and others. Many of these companies had employees throughout the southern states where synthetic stucco came into widespread use in the 90's. After failures began to be reported, a frenzy of activity and lawsuits followed that led some relocation companies and real estate professionals to view all stucco as being under a black cloud.

This is not a fair representation of the material, as the problem was never the product but its improper installation and not following the manufacturer's installation recommendations, by those early builders unfamiliar with this new Exterior Insulated Finish System.

Cementitious Stucco

Beginning in the early part of 2000 reports of cementitious stucco failures began accumulating. How could a system that has been successfully been used for a thousand years, now suddenly fail? We discovered how this occurs.

Moisture Forensics and Cost-Effective Solutions

Synthetic and cementitious stucco remain the favorite choice by many design architects and continues to be used in nearly all midrise commercial buildings and hotels, as well as in many upscale residences. It allows great design flexibility, has excellent insulating ability and is economical, if installed and maintained correctly.

- Do you know if your stucco was installed properly?
- Does it have existing unseen issues?
- Is it the proper system type and thickness?
- Are the correct exterior flashings present?

Most issues with stucco, especially in residential wood frame construction, occur when moisture intrusion becomes trapped within the wall cavity. This can occur from a number of reasons: use of incorrect moisture barrier; missing or inadequate in-wall window or door flashing; window head flashing; inadequate finish thickness - 5/8 min to 7/8 of an inch on three coat systems; or missing - or improper type of - caulking. Any of these elements can cause a failure, potentially leading to

hidden structural damage, fungus or mold. These problems generally CANNOT be detected through a mere visual inspection, but require trained expert technicians and specialty equipment. However, many of the companies claiming such expertise both inspect and repair these systems – a potential conflict of interest.

Our findings indicate that approximately 70% of the time repairs only are needed - the entire finish does not require replacement. In many cases, timely maintenance may head off larger and more expensive problems in the future. So why are entire systems being torn off and replaced when most of the system is intact, dry and functioning as intended?

We have 30 years of experience and training, coupled with the newest specialized testing equipment and thermal investigation equipment. We are able to honestly and without bias investigate, and provide a written photo report of a system's condition. More importantly, we can identify the flawed issues and prescribe appropriate repairs. Whether your system is typical and proves to be in the 70% or the 30% group, we can assist you in the process of discovering, and restoring your system – in whole or in part.

Lastly, not every stucco system that we inspection actually needs repairs. Those that do not need repairs may only require basic missing caulking and/or sealing to maintain their integrity.

FAQ

- Do you perform repairs or participate in the repairs with a contractor?
 - NO
- Can you provide names of certified contractors if work is required?
 - YES
- Can you provide estimates from independent contractors for comparison?
 - YES
- Are you available if needed during the repairs if there is a question?
 - YES
- Is there a fixed price or cost for the inspection?
 - YES - it is based on the square footage and the structure's size