

Stucco over Metal Lath Attached to CMU

Technical Bulletin

TB029

Category: Stucco

Keywords: Stucco, Metal Lath, CMU Attachment

All portland cement plaster (stucco) is expected to crack. Cracking is inherent in the nature of the material as a relatively thin rigid coating. Cracks in stucco are not a defect in the stucco. Cracks in cement plaster are simply stress relief. It is often difficult to identify the source of the stress when looking at cracks in a stucco application.

All structures are subjected to stress in various forms which are transferred to the stucco. Stucco is not a structural component. Stucco is a cladding attached to substrate construction which will crack if transferred stress overcomes the plasters ability to withstand it.

When installing stucco over concrete masonry units, you may either direct apply the stucco to the CMU or install a water resistive barrier and lath the CMU.

Direct Application

Cracks in the CMU will propagate through the stucco and without a water resistive barrier, water may penetrate into the wall assembly. However, unless the bond between the CMU and stucco is lost, the stucco will not have movement cracks unless the CMU does.

Lathed Application

Lathed stucco can lead to cracks in the stucco independent of any cracks in the CMU. Lath also has the potential to rust, causing loss of attachment and, since rust takes up more volume than steel, spalling of the stucco can result. However, when a water-resistive barrier is installed behind the lath, it can block the passage of water into the CMU.

There may be other factors as well that are taken into account when selecting which of these two types of application to make. The selection is up to the project designer.

If you should have any further questions please feel free to call.

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