

Stucco



**Stucco Manufacturers Association**

# Three-Coat Stucco Maintenance Guidelines

*The following information is provided to assist you in maintaining the exterior three-coat Portland cement-based finish on your home.*

## **Cleaning your home's exterior:**

Dirt, soil, atmosphere deposited dusts, and roof run-off stains from dirt that settle on the roof should be removed to maintain the stucco on your home.

Most stains caused by the above-mentioned items can be removed, if addressed in a timely manner, following the steps listed below.

1. Pre-wet the wall, saturating it. Start at the bottom and work to the top.
2. Use a garden hose to direct a pressure stream of water against the wall to loosen the dirt. Start at the top and wash the dirt down the wall. Caked-on dirt may require brushing.
3. Mild cleaners may be used to remove stains. Choose water-soluble cleaners that will not attack Portland cement, lime, or oxide pigment colors.
4. Flush remaining dirt off the wall with a follow-up rinse.

In the event you encounter a stain that cannot be removed by using the above steps, refinishing, fog coating, or brush coating may restore the original color. If possible, try to obtain the color number and stucco manufacturer's information for future maintenance

## **Refinishing or recoloring:**

When it becomes time to refinish your stucco system, you have several options. If you need to patch some damaged areas (e.g., around new windows or doors), use your stucco manufacturer's color number to order new stucco to match your existing finish. Keep in mind that your home may fade in color over time, and if your home is old, you may need to ask the manufacturer to match the color of your home in their Color Lab. It is recommended that, if you are not familiar with the application of cementitious stucco products, you use a qualified stucco contractor for your project.

Stucco surfaces that have not been painted can be completely recolored using Fog Coat. This product is also useful to even out color variations and finish off patched areas. Fog Coat is a cement-based paint that is available in all the same colors as stucco. It is mixed with water and sprayed or brushed onto the stucco surface to recolor the building. Since it is cement based, it forms a tenacious mechanical bond with the underlying cement surfaces and will not chip, peel or flake.

## General maintenance:

Finally, there are a few preventative maintenance steps that may be followed to assist in the upkeep of your exterior finish.

1. Installation of gutters and downspouts is the best way to prevent staining and efflorescence on the exterior walls.
2. Lining the first few feet of planters with rock, gravel, bark, etc. will prevent dirt from splashing on the walls during seasonal weather conditions. Caution: All sprinkler and irrigation systems must be directed away from all exterior stucco walls.
3. Installing concrete walkways soon after move-in will also help to keep your walls clean and dirt free. When installing hardscape or landscape, (i.e. brick, cement, planters, pavers, rough landscaping) make sure to maintain proper clearances from the weep screed per UBC requirements.
4. Window cleaning solutions should be rinsed off so that they are not left to dissolve or dry on the stucco surface.

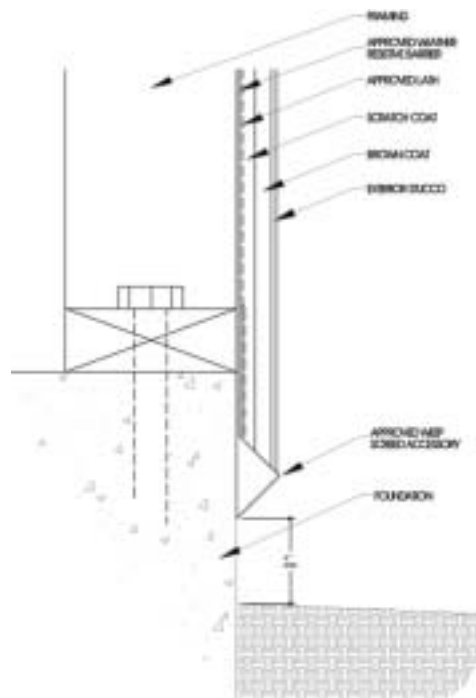
Over time, rust and dirt accumulates on metal accessories such as windowsills, light fixtures, vents, etc. and must be removed periodically to prevent stain deposits on the stucco surface.

Trims, flashings and building accessories need to be maintained so that water intrusion behind the weather resistive barrier does not occur.

Cracking will occur on most residential homes finished with exterior cement based plaster. Cracking is typical in cement based plaster systems and in most cases is not considered a defect. Most cracks are caused by building settlement and shrinkage, which is typical and

expected in cement plaster systems. It is important to note that these cracks do not jeopardize the water resistant properties of your stucco system. The weather resistive barrier is located beneath the cement coating. This is the component that protects your home from moisture intrusion.

Three-coat stucco systems are designed with protection against water penetration (i.e. around windows, doors, cracks, etc.). Any moisture that penetrates the weather-resistant barrier drains out at the weep screed. This is why it is extremely important to keep finish grades, such as planters and concrete walkways, below the weep line. For additional information, please consult the stucco manufacturer's written recommendations. (See diagram below.)



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