

Fox Inspection Group

Providing Peace Of Mind,
One Home At A Time, Since 1989!™



7 Most Common Stucco Issues

**A Homeowner's Guide to
Inspecting Your Stucco Siding**

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7 am to 7 pm 7 days a week!

Amidst the competitive world of construction stucco is still holding its own firm place, once originating during the old Roman and Greek civilizations. Its success goes to its versatile virtues of a brilliant heat resistant finish to a wall, adding along with it a great deal of decor. It is highly resistant to fire, durable and shows immense strength against harsh weather. The beauty of this great finish lies in the fact that it doesn't spread flames or create smoke.

Stucco siding is excellent for homeowners who want their homes to stand out. The versatility of stucco makes it the best choice for themed dwellings such as Spanish and Greek style homes. And since this type of siding can be painted, the stucco colors are endless.



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Let's Begin!

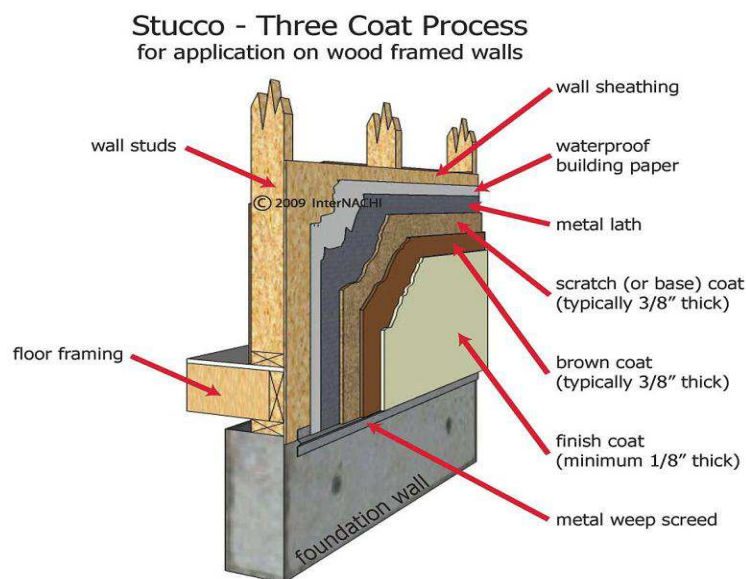
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What Is Stucco?

Traditional stucco, also called masonry stucco looks very similar to synthetic stucco. For this reason, homeowners usually can't tell the difference by doing a visual side-by-side comparison of the two. One way to determine whether stucco is traditional or synthetic is to knock on the surface – traditional stucco is solid, while synthetic stucco will sound hollow.

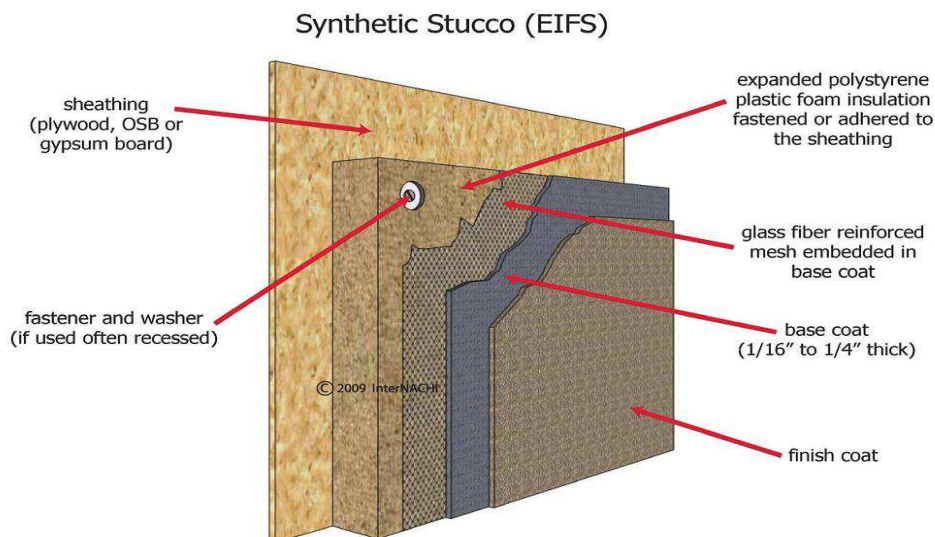
Traditional/Hard Coat Stucco -- As the name suggests it is hard, but brittle. Traditional stucco is made with Portland cement, lime, water and sand, and then placed over mesh. Traditional stucco's fire resistant properties help reduce the cost of your homeowner's insurance. Masonry stucco absorbs water, and dries easily because of its porous nature. Although this type of stucco is extremely durable, it is prone to surface cracks and chips.

Once the substrate/construction surface is installed properly, a metal lath is applied and then the stucco finish is applied on it using a trowel. It is generally applied over metal lath or masonry in two or three coats. The first coat is approximately 3/8 inch thick, and is called the "ground" coat. The second coat is also approximately 3/8 inch thick, and is called the "scratch" coat. The third coat is the finish coat and is approximately 1/8 inch thick. The total thickness should range from 3/4 inch to 1 inch.



Synthetic Stucco -- It is made up of the basic cement stucco and various fibers and synthetic acrylic materials. These additional synthetic ingredients make it strong and flexible. Synthetic stuccoes are lighter in weight and hence weaker than its older counterpart. It also proves to be easy to apply as it is single coat stucco unlike the traditional three coat stuccoes. Starting 1950's many houses has started using synthetic stucco or synthetic materials akin to synthetic stucco. Synthetic stucco is made by applying an acrylic-polymer coat over fiberglass mesh and foam board. Synthetic stucco siding is long-lasting, and resistant to cracks. This type of stucco siding is very durable, but it is prone to impact damage from things such as hail and woodpeckers.

Currently EIFS (Exterior Insulation & Finish Systems) is the most extensively used form of stucco. These stuccoes consist of three layers. The base layer is composed of polystyrene like substance, which is a foam insulation board. The middle layer is made up of fiberglass mesh covered with a base coating. The finishing layer is a simple color layer. These make a great stucco layer which can be glued or attached to the construction surface mechanically. Such layers have excellent insulation properties, are cheap and very easy to install. Synthetic stuccoes though have disadvantages like water absorption which may incur water damage to the buildings



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What Do I Look For?

Stucco over frame is likely to exhibit hairline and alligator cracking because the frame is much more flexible than the stucco.

A common problem with stucco as it gets older is that water may get behind it and cause the stucco to separate from the wall. The areas where this is most likely to occur is below windows and where rainwater drains off of a roof, and runs down the stucco wall.

Moisture can get behind synthetic siding via broken caulk joints, punctures and poorly sealed windows. When this happens, the moisture has no way of escaping, and can cause serious damage to walls. To prevent costly problems, inspect your stucco regularly and repair damage as needed.

Windows and doors

1. Look for peeling paint, evidence of water damage on the interior wall.
2. Look for staining on the exterior wall.
3. Check for caulking around window sills and door jams. Stucco manufacturers recommend a specific sealant for their windows.



Peeling Paint



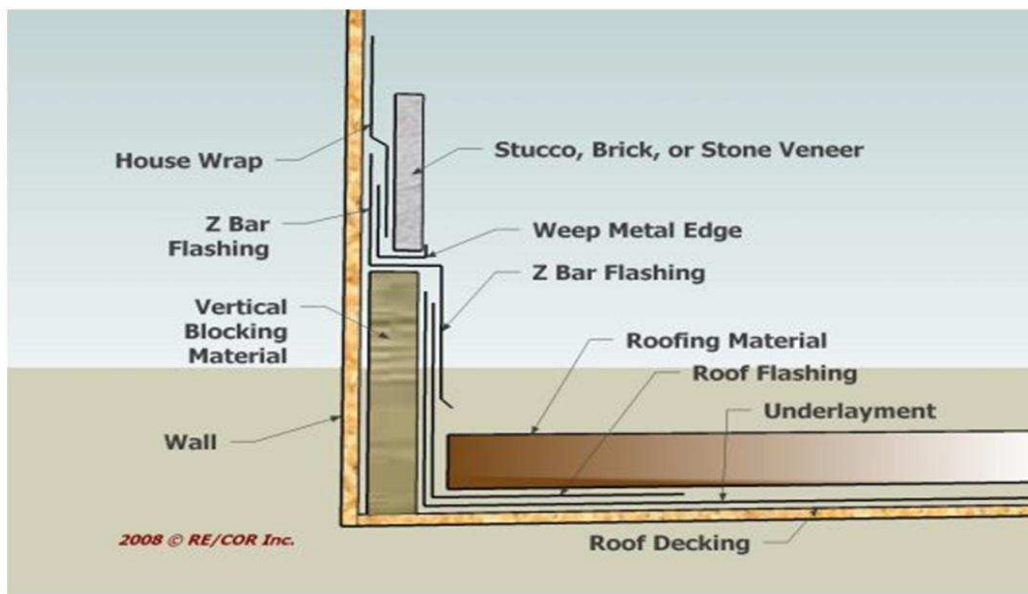
Stained Stucco



Window Caulking

Flashings:

4. Flashings at appropriate places direct water away from the house. Missing, improper or unsealed flashings where roof lines terminate into a stucco wall will allow roof run-off to be dumped directly behind the stucco



Proper Installation of Z Bar Flashing

5. Water must be directed away from windows, decks, gutters, etc. Is sill pan flashing present or is it needed?

Double Buck (Set-In) Window and Door Corner Sill Pan Flashing with 1/2" Back-dam



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Caulking:

6. Penetrations in the stucco at decks, hose bibs, dryer vents, light fixtures, satellite dishes, etc. must be properly sealed with the appropriate sealant. All joints where stucco meets a dissimilar material must be sealed with the appropriate sealant.



Unsealed Pipe Penetration

7. Existing sealants should be adhered, soft and flexible.

How Do I Fix It?

Home Repairs:

Small surface cracks in stucco can be covered with a coat of paint or sealant.

1. Inspect the wall for cracks in the stucco. Small cracks will be filled in with the paint but larger cracks will need to be filled with an elastomeric sealant.
2. Scrub the wall with soap and water to get rid of dust, dirt, mildew and loose paint.
3. Prepare the area for painting by removing fixtures, covering areas you don't want painted with masking tape and putting a drop cloth on the floor.
4. Select a paint. Acrylic latex paint formulated for stucco is the best choice. Be sure to use exterior paint for an exterior wall.
5. Fill up a roller pan with the paint.
6. Dip a paint roller into a roller pan full of paint and get it pretty saturated. If the roller is full of paint the paint will get into the rough surface of the stucco more easily.
7. Start from the top of the wall and roll down in a straight column. Then roll up. Next, shift a bit to the left or right and start a new column overlapping with the old one.
8. Go over your work to cover any missed spots as the paint starts to run out.
9. Load the roller with paint and start painting again.
10. Clean up when you're done.



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Bring In a Professional:

Larger cracks may indicate more severe problems that can't be fixed using caulk and/or paint. These types of movement cracks require the help of professionals who know how to repair stucco properly.

Flashing should be installed or repaired by a professional.

Peeling paint, stained stucco, and missing caulk around doors and windows, especially, indicate that water may have penetrated behind the stucco. Water behind stucco can cause wood rot of the framing. Always call a professional to check behind your stucco if you see signs of water penetration!



The most extensive damage is usually found below windows

Credit Is Due...

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Water Splashing from Eaves



No Diverter Flashing
Has Been Installed

Fox Inspection Group

“I'm very pleased with the inspection that Fox did. I am very happy that I will be purchasing the home. Hopefully I won't be moving again after that, but if I do, I will definitely call Fox Group. Many thanks to all.”

Jim Groves

“Best inspection I have ever had and I have had many. I have called the inspector a couple of times and he has been wonderful and quick to respond. He did an excellent job and I look forward to using the Fox Inspection Group again. I will definitely refer you all to every one I know.”

Leonard Atkins

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