

April 13, 2009

Building Code Hint of the Week: Stucco

Florida builders should be aware of changes to the **Florida Building Code** relating to stucco. The new building code has a **weather protection requirement** in Section R703.13 (see table 703.13) (page 7.17 and 7.18) specifying that concrete block walls must be finished with a system that provides **weather proofing** such that the wall does not allow the passage of moisture. One of the methods a builder may use is a **stucco finish**. If stucco is selected as the weather protection method it must have **1/2" thickness of Portland cement** applied to the wall if **two coats** are used, and **5/8" if three coats** are used. There are slightly different requirements for concrete walls. Additionally, be advised that because a Portland-based material is used which is what stucco is, **Section R703.6** (page 7.5) requires that ASTM C926 be adhered to. This is important because certain trim materials must be used – **control joints, lath must have dimples**, and the **sand must meet ASTM standards** which, in some parts of the state, can only be met when the sand is **delivered in bags**. According to **Jack Glenn**, Technical Services Director for the **Florida Home Builders Association** (FHBA), members are strongly advised to download a copy of this standard from www.ASTM.org for \$37, read it carefully, and be prepared to explain it to your stucco subcontractors. "If your stucco subcontractor does commercial work where sufficiently sophisticated architects are involved, then that sub already understands this requirement," Glenn explained. "However, you do need to let your residential subcontractors know that they need to follow ASTM C926. Some builders have already been red tagged for not following the standard. That can be very costly once trim is on the house and the house is painted." Glenn notes that a decorative **cementitious coating** (a skim coat, as defined in ASTM C926, of Portland-cement-based plaster applied to concrete or masonry surfaces intended for cosmetic purposes) is still allowed, but the weather protection must be provided by some other means. Even paint, if properly applied, may be used to meet this requirement. There are weather protection requirements for other types of walls as well that are specified in Table R703.13.