



Stucco and Cementitious Building Finishes - Part 1 of 2

Two commonly seen exterior building finishes, often referred to by the blanket term “Stucco” are **Portland Cement Stucco** and **EIFS (Exterior Insulation and Finishing System)**. While both may be similar in appearance, the systems are differentiated by component, assembly, installation and durability characteristics.

Portland Cement Stucco

Traditional Stucco / Plaster application, originally composed of Lime, Sand and Water with animal or plant fibers added for reinforcement, changed in the latter part of the 19th century when Portland cement replaced lime as a primary component. This system is also referred to as “California Stucco.”

Typical application over concrete substrate consists of a Scratch Coat, Brown Coat and a Finish Coat. Application over wood or other substrate requires addition of vapor barrier / moisture management system and wire lath (or similar product) to add strength and provide the cementitious base coating with a substrate to adhere to.

Scratch Coat – heavy application of cement and sand, finished with a brush or tool in a “criss-cross” pattern. This coat fully cures before the next application

Brown Coat – Leveling coat of cement, sand and lime, scraped smooth and floated to provide an even surface for the finish coat application. This coat cures 7-10 days, and should then be checked for cracks, shrinkage and other deficiencies.

Finish Coat – Color Coat of Acrylic Finish, applied over the Brown Coat, typically 1mm to 4mm thick – This can be colored by additives (color coat) or ordered colored from the manufacturer (acrylic finish). Application can be floated smooth with water to produce an even sandy finish, or textured with trowels for a variety of looks.

