

The Commercial Inspector

A Monthly Newsletter From Global Property Inspections

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ask the inspector

Q. What are the types of exterior surfaces I may see on a commercial building?

A. Building cladding is an exterior finish material installed on the exterior walls of a building. The cladding helps keep the outside elements out and can provide an aesthetically pleasing appearance to the building. Cladding comes in many forms and materials, which are generally chosen based on the building's design and use.

Masonry veneer may be brick or stone. This is one of the more expensive building cladding systems, and it requires a high upfront cost but will likely last for decades with very little maintenance.

Masonry veneer may consist of various types of brick, stone or clay products attached to structural framing. The cost of the materials and the labor to install this type of cladding system increase the expense; however, the veneer is durable and difficult to damage.



Stucco can be either a masonry hard coat installed on a wall or a synthetic installed over a rigid foam panel. Installation for both of these products is labor-intensive and requires skilled technicians.

snapshots from the field

What Type of Siding is Pictured Below?



- A) Vinyl
- B) Brick veneer
- C) Stucco
- D) Metal

(answer on the back)

The hard coat is a masonry product applied over a building wrap with lath secured to the wall to hold the stucco in place.

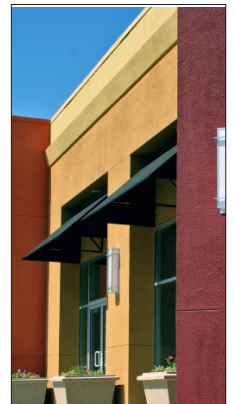
Synthetic stucco is made of artificial components and applied over a foam insulation board. The finish can mimic the texture of hard-coat stucco, or it can be troweled smooth. Stuccos require more maintenance than masonry, but they are very durable.

Metal siding comes in several varieties: corrugated steel, aluminum panels and panels made with other alloys. Metal panels are strong and durable and will last for years with minimum maintenance. Metal cladding in general is fairly expensive, although it is resistant to rot, termites and most kinds of damage.

Wood is a common type of exterior cladding. Wood siding is applied over the exterior sheathing of a building in overlapping rows.

Fiber cement consists of rough sand and cement with a fiber mixed in to improve durability. It resembles wood and is usually installed in overlapping rows. These materials are quite durable, but they require more maintenance than other kinds of cladding.

Vinyl siding consists of rows of polyvinyl chloride resin panels installed on a stable substrate over a building wrap. The cost per square foot for vinyl is relatively low, and vinyl is easy to cut, install and replace when damaged. Vinyl siding requires low maintenance and does not need to be painted.



for your information

The Danger of Grow-op Buildings

Do you know whether your commercial building was used as a marijuana grow-op in the past? We're not talking about someone who has one or two marijuana plants, either; we're talking about commercial marijuana grow-ops. You won't know unless you ask the previous owner, and even then you may not get an honest answer.



Grow-ops involve dangerous retrofitting and modification of certain systems, and the high levels of moisture they incur throughout a building can cause structural damage.

If you suspect that your building or a building you're considering buying was once used as a grow-op, you may want to discreetly notify the local police.

maintenance matters

Tips for Maintaining Your Building's Exterior

To keep the exterior of your building looking and functioning well, follow these tips:

- » Keep the exterior cladding sealed and caulked.
- » Scrape away chipping paint and repaint the building as needed.
- » Maintain the proper clearance between siding and the grade (earth).
- » Clean the exterior regularly.
- » Repair and seal any cracks when you notice them.
- » Stick to an ongoing maintenance plan for safety and building upkeep.

With these simple tips, your building will stay energy efficient, safe and looking great.

did you know?

Deter and Manage Water Around Your Building With a Rainscreen System

One of the basic approaches to water penetration control in a commercial building is a rainscreen — basically, draining the rain.

This type of moisture management system incorporates cladding, an air cavity, a drainage plane and an airtight support wall to offer multiple moisture-shedding pathways.

There are two types of rainscreens: simple rainscreens and pressure-equalized rainscreens (PERs).

Simple rainscreens work best in areas with annual precipitation of less than 60 inches, whereas PERs are effective in climates with an annual precipitation of 60 inches or more.

By installing a rainscreen system on your commercial building, you can eliminate or reduce moisture problems in the building's exterior walls, including siding rot and peeling paint.

Thermal shock, solar-driven moisture effects, and pressure forces are also diminished. In high-moisture environments, the additional cost and complexity of PER construction may be cost effective over the long term.

Snapshots from the field *The correct answer is C) The material is stucco.*