STUCCO FUTURES

Continuous Insulation Stucco Systems: Field Experience and Next Steps

January 16, 2026

The January 16, 2026 Stucco Futures session centered on continuous insulation (CI) stucco systems. One member shared extensive jobsite experience through a screen-share, prompting a discussion of water management, fire performance, standards, and the market position of stucco.

The Question

Continuous insulation is no longer an edge condition. How must stucco systems adapt to perform, and be specified clearly, in CI assemblies?

Field Experience with CI Stucco

- The rationale for placing insulation inboard of the sheathing to improve continuity and control layers
- The increasing importance of well-detailed weather-resistive barriers and drainage strategies
- Coordination challenges introduced by layered assemblies
- The practical implications of fire code compliance, including NFPA 285

The group acknowledged that CI is increasingly the norm and that stucco systems must continue to adapt.

Water Management Is a System Responsibility

A significant part of the discussion treated water management as a system responsibility rather than a product attribute. Topics included:

- Single versus dual drainage planes
- The benefits of two-layer systems with sacrificial drainage layers
- Recurring failures at transitions, joints, and terminations rather than in field areas
- Ongoing ambiguity around flashing responsibility and trade sequencing

There was strong agreement that clarity in detailing and scope is as critical as material selection.

Fire Performance and Insulation Choices

Participants discussed differences among insulation types, fire-blocking requirements and how jurisdictions interpret them, and the need to balance fire performance, moisture management, and constructability within CI stucco assemblies.

Standards and Market Position

The group briefly acknowledged the difficulty of evolving ASTM standards fast enough to reflect modern CI assemblies, and the downstream effect on defensibility and risk. There was consensus that the Exchange should not dwell on conflict, but contribute to better standards through evidence, collaboration, and technical clarity.

Participants also noted that litigation risk and perceived complexity continue to affect stucco's position in some regions, while competing claddings often benefit from a perception of simplicity. That reinforces the need for clearer systems thinking, training, and specification language that protect both performance and design intent.

Where Focused Innovation Would Help

- Clearer drainage strategies and water-exit detailing
- Better system-level approaches to attachment and integration through insulation
- Assembly-level fire testing that reflects real-world construction
- Reduced ambiguity around responsibility for WRB continuity and flashing
- Division 09 language that aligns with how buildings are actually being built

What It Means in Practice

CI stucco performance depends on clear scope and detailing as much as on materials. Water exit, WRB continuity, flashing responsibility, and attachment through insulation should each be defined in the specification and drawings, not left to be resolved in the field.

Industry Resources

A representative of the Stucco Manufacturers Association (SMA) gave an overview of its training programs and monthly technical committee meetings, which are open to broader participation. The group emphasized cross-association collaboration and shared education to connect field experience with technical development.

Next Steps

- Jobsite evidence on CI stucco assemblies will continue to be shared.
- Discussion will advance on drainage mat interpretation, along with the proposal process for continuously insulated stucco within ASTM.
- NFPA-compliant insulation pathways will be outlined in future sessions.
- Further presentations will cover SMA training and technical engagement.

What do you think?

Let us know at www.clarkdietrich.com/stuccofutures, or on LinkedIn, Instagram, or Facebook #stuccofutures