STUCCO FUTURES

Control Joint Installation Requirements under ASTM C1063

July 31, 2026

Few topics in stucco standards draw as much debate as control joint installation. The July 31, 2026 Stucco Futures session, a smaller group than usual, took a close look at two sections of ASTM C1063 that appear to contradict each other, and at what field and test data say about how control joints should be attached.

The Question

Does the current ASTM control joint standard reflect how stucco systems are designed and installed today, and if there is a gap, how do we close it?

The Core Issue: A Conflict in the Standard

C1063 and its companion standard C926 evolved from older committee standards dating to the late 1960s, which were largely carried over when ASTM took them on. One participant with long experience in ASTM meetings focused the group on two provisions that are difficult to satisfy at the same time:

- **Section 7.3.1.5:** Lath shall not be continuous through control joints, but shall be stopped and tied at each side.
- **Section 7.4.2.1:** Lathing accessory attachment flanges, including control joints, must be secured to the substrate at a maximum of 7-inch intervals along framing members.

Tying lath to a control joint does not fasten the joint's own flanges to framing at 7-inch intervals, and vice versa. Participants noted the ambiguity likely originated in older language written for suspended ceiling lathing, which was never updated as the standard grew to cover wall assemblies.

Several attendees raised a liability concern. These standards are increasingly used in legal and forensic settings, and an internally contradictory standard exposes installers who cannot comply with both provisions at once.

What the Test Data Showed

One participant presented results from a 2017 test, funded by the Northwest Wall and Ceiling Bureau and TSIB, aimed at generating real data on this question:

- Ten 14' x 14' panels with 16-gauge, 16" o.c. metal framing, woven wire mesh, hand-applied three-coat plaster, and a control joint, each built with a different lath and control joint attachment method.
- Monitored outdoors for 697 days, nearly two years, with periodic site visits to log new cracking.
- Every panel cracked, regardless of attachment method. No method eliminated cracking.
- Crack widths were almost uniformly hairline, 10 to 15 thousandths of an inch on most panels, with one outlier at 30 thousandths.
- Cracking tended to occur mid-span within panels rather than at the control joints themselves.

One panel, with no backer stud and lath cut and tied on both sides, showed almost no cracking for the first 150 days and the fewest cracks overall. However, its unfastened joint could be pulled in and out roughly half an inch, so it failed flatness tolerance. The group's consensus: fewer cracks aren't useful if the wall can't pass inspection.

The presenter's takeaway was that the test alone was not conclusive enough to change the standard. ASTM's stucco task group had previously indicated that such a study needs broader industry participation to carry weight.

Other Perspectives Raised

- One member shared a much older field trial from a 66-building stucco job in California in the late 1980s, where four control joint attachment methods were compared. The outcome was the same: no meaningful difference between methods. The member also referenced a 1984 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report that flagged continuous lath behind a control joint as a deficiency, the oldest documented reference to the issue anyone on the call had found.
- Another member, with 35 years in the trade and now in forensics, offered a counterpoint: curing discipline and plaster embedment mattered far more than attachment method. They cited a zero-cracking result on a major airport project, attributed to strict water curing for seven days.
- A participant noted a regional practice difference: West Coast crews traditionally used a cement-rich scratch coat with a sandier brown coat. Much of this trade knowledge is informal and at risk of being lost as senior plasterers retire.
- One attendee asked about environmental variables such as sun exposure and reflected heat. All panels received comparable exposure, though the test was not a full building with multiple elevations.
- A real-world example on a grocery store project with largely CMU walls showed the cost of ambiguous language: a literal reading of the control joint spacing requirement nearly led the owner to abandon stucco altogether until the standard was clarified.

What It Means in Practice

Standards represent a floor, not a ceiling. Architects can always specify above the minimum, but the minimum itself should be internally consistent and buildable, not create a de facto impossible installation.

What Remains Unresolved

- The group generally agreed the conflict between 7.3.1.5 and 7.4.2.1 is worth pursuing as a future ASTM ballot item, though no one is actively working on it. ASTM's consensus process is slow.
- One idea floated was replacing the word "tied" with "fastened," allowing installers to use the fastener type appropriate to the substrate: nail, staple, screw, or wire.
- How can designers and architects be better educated on this issue in the meantime?

Next Steps

- The 2017 test presenter will seek permission from the funding organizations to share the full presentation materials more broadly.
- A scan of the 1984 U.S. Army Corps of Engineers report will be circulated.
- The session was recorded for anyone who could not attend live.
- The August meeting is cancelled. The group will meet again online September 25 at 8:30 AM.

What do you think?

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