

February 1, 2008

### EIMA Investigates Monte Carlo Fire

On Friday afternoon, January 25, 2008, a fire at the Monte Carlo Casino in Las Vegas, NV burned a portion of the decorative attachments that contained foam plastic attached to its exterior walls. EIMA's consultant was immediately dispatched to Las Vegas to monitor the fire but could not meet with the officials or gain access to the site until following Monday.

For the next three days, the EIMA consultant visited the site and met extensively with local building officials, fire marshals, members of the ATF and owner's representatives. During those meetings, he educated them on what EIFS systems are and continually stressed that these systems are fire tested and how well they perform in a fire. He formally requested permission to get representative wall samples through the fire department and the building department for inspection and evaluation. However, it appears that there may be jurisdictional delays or difficulties in acquiring samples for analysis. EIMA has requested a 2-foot wide sample extending from the top of the screen wall down through the lowest horizontal pop out to provide the information needed to determine exactly what construction materials are involved.

Welding and cutting taking place on the roof without the proper permits caused the fire. A preliminary observation, though not officially confirmed, is that areas of special shapes and flat walls that are not EIFS, but contained polyurethane coated foam plastic, spread the fire and involved adjoining EIFS sections. Further, where the fire came in contact with EIFS sections, the fire was not spread. This type of fire behavior has been previously documented in fires involving polyurethane coated foam plastic shapes.

EIFS undergo rigorous fire testing required by the building code authorities to qualify for use. Further, EIFS has been proven to perform as designed and tested in real world situations.

Because there may be untested or inadequately tested materials that imitate the appearance of EIFS, it is of special concern to EIMA to emphasize that only fully fire tested wall cladding materials should be used on non-combustible construction.

Over the past decade, EIMA and its members have continuously stressed the importance of using only materials that are fire tested, code approved full EIFS systems on their projects. Our industry's position paper is attached.

EIMA is taking the following steps: (1) complete our investigation; (2) issue a press release and report based on the official results of our investigation; (3) continue to provide appropriate information regarding the performance of EIFS; (4) assist the owner with technical installation information for a successful restoration; and (5) provide accurate and complete information to the media.

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EIFS INDUSTRY  
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#### LET US HEAR FROM YOU

Happy New Year! EIMA is your organization. Our commitment to you for 2008 is improved communication. We encourage you to discuss and bring to our attention any issues of concern. We want to hear from you, and we are glad to discuss the Annual Meeting or how EIMA can better serve you.



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## THE DANGERS OF UNTESTED MATERIALS

By Stephan E. Klamke

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All bona fide EIF systems (EIFS) consist of foam insulation board, an adhesive and/or mechanical attachment of the insulation board to a substrate, a base coat on the face of the insulation, a glass fiber reinforcing mesh and a textured, protective finish coat. These systems have been tested for their ability to effectively resist fire, as required by all US model building codes, successfully passing required tests and exhibiting desired performance in actual fires. To assure good fire performance, installed assemblies must be comprised of the same components to that tested.

Sometimes assemblies are installed using untested materials and practices. Unfortunately, many untested materials and practices that resemble EIFS cannot be readily distinguished by observation from fire-tested, code-compliant EIFS systems. Such untested configurations and/or materials may fail to meet building code requirements.

Why might the use of untested, non-code complying materials increase the risk of a fire? To illustrate, EPS insulation used in noncombustible construction is traditionally attached to a gypsum board or concrete/masonry substrate. In a fire, these substrates act as a heat sink slowing the temperature increase and delaying ignition. When the traditional EIFS substrate is removed, ignition of the EPS can occur more quickly and may result in flame propagation. The base coat and reinforcing mesh have been shown to resist flame spread and also help to retard ignition by forming a protective barrier over the EPS. Substituting untested coatings such as polyurethane or polyurea for traditional EIFS base coat and finish has been shown to increase the flammability of these applications in a fire. Any modification to a tested and approved design, such as the use of polyurethane based coating or trim accessories at the heads of wall penetrations and at horizontal terminations (expansion joints) should only be undertaken after appropriate fire test(s) have been conducted to verify no adverse affects on fire performance.

The type of insulation board used in an EIFS application can also have an impact on the product's performance in a fire. For example, employing a foam plastic other than a traditional EPS board could lower resistance to fire. Regardless of the type of foam insulation installed, it should never exceed the maximum thickness allowed, and it should be identical to that used in the system that was fire tested (or listed in manufacturer's current evaluation reports.)

To avoid the potential for unsatisfactory performance in a fire, architects, and contractors who specify and install EIFS should employ only fire-tested, code approved full EIFS on their projects.

For further information, please contact EIMA's office at 800.294.3462.