To: All Builder Members  
Date: June 7th, 2012  
From: Amie Blanchette  
Director, Government Affairs  
Subject: Continuous Handrails & Acrylic Stucco Clarification

Attention: All Builders

The City of Calgary has released two new documents in response to questions brought forward from CHBA-Calgary Region members on the accepted protocol for both continuous handrails and acrylic stucco. Please see the attached documents.

Should you have any general questions or concerns regarding these two topics, please contact the city directly at 311. If your concern surfaces during the design stage of your project, ask to speak to a residential plans examiner. If you have already progressed to the inspection stage, you can request to speak to an inspection supervisor for further clarification.
Continuous Handrails Q&A for CHBA

Question: Is a handrail required by the 2006 Alberta Building Code on the outside or inside of a winder stair in a house?

Answer: A handrail is required on either the inside or outside of a winder stair less than 1100mm wide, not on both. The requirements are found in Article 9.8.7.1. of Division B.

Question: What is meant by a handrail that is “continuous throughout the length of the stair” in article 9.8.7.2.?

Answer: A “continuous” handrail is one that does not have any breaks in it from the bottom of the stair to the top. A hand should be able to run from one end of the stair to the other without having to break the handhold at changes in section. Having to change sides from the outside to the inside is also not “continuous”. One way of not breaking the handhold that would be acceptable under the Alberta Building Code is that the handrail can be milled so that it is smooth and flows around corners without visible joints. This becomes difficult in winders where the sections are short and angles difficult. The other way is to provide butt joints between sections. The sections should touch or be very close to touching at their ends but do not have to be perfectly fitted. The handhold is still not broken at these joints. This allows for slight angle and height differences at difficult situations such as winder stairs.

Question: Can I meet the requirements of the Alberta Building Code for a “continuous” handrail at the inside of the winder stair by using a newel post?

Answer: The inside of a winder stair generally has a newel post or is the corner of a wall. In either case there is a lower handrail for the low section of stair and an upper handrail for the upper section. The issue is providing continuity between the two at the newel post or wall corner. The most common and acceptable method under the Alberta Building Code is to provide a vertical section of handrail joining the lower and upper sections. It can be fastened to the wall corner or the newel post. Another acceptable means is a gooseneck that connects the lower handrail to the newel post just shy of the upper handrail but with the newel post in between that can be used for support in the transition.

Question: Does the requirement to be “continuous” apply to the stair to the unfinished basement?

Answer: Yes. There is no exemption for an unfinished basement.
**Acrylic Stucco Q&A for CHBA**

Question: Are there requirements for acrylic stucco in the 2006 Alberta Building Code?

Answer: The Alberta Building Code does not contain requirements specific to acrylic stucco. There are requirements for cementitious stucco in Section 9.28.

Question: If there is no reference to acrylic stucco does that mean that acrylic stucco cannot be used on a house?

Answer: Acrylic stucco is most often found as the outermost component of a multi-component exterior insulation finishing system (EIFS). Since EIFS and/or Acrylic stucco are not directly permitted under the requirements of the Alberta Building code, they can only be used on a house using one of two different provisions of the Alberta Building Code:

1. if the material has been evaluated by the Canadian Construction Material Center (CCMC) as meeting the requirements of a cladding in the Alberta Building Code. The CCMC listing will state what article in the building code that the material has been evaluated to comply with. Sentence 1.2.2.1.(2) of Division A of the Alberta Building Code spells out this option.

2. if there is a professional Architect or Engineer involved for the specific project it is to be used on and that professional has evaluated the applicability of the material to the requirements of the Alberta Building Code. This means that there would have to be project specific professional involvement (design and inspection) on each project the system is to be used on whether there is professional involvement for the overall project or not. This “all or part of plans...” requirement is summed up in Sentence 2.4.2.1.(8) of Division C of the 2006 Alberta Building Code.

Question: Can acrylic stucco be used in conjunction with or in combination with cementitious stucco?

Answer: Acrylic stucco finish coat is permitted to be applied over a code complying 2 or 3 coat system found in Section 9.28 of the Alberta Building Code under the following conditions:

- The contractor can show that the permeability of the product is greater than that required for a vapour barrier so as to not create a second vapour barrier and in the wrong location
- The contractor can show that the current manufacturer’s instructions permit the application over a cementitious base
- The coating may not exceed 2mm in thickness (this is the maximum shown for CCMC listed EIFS system finish coats) and this thickness is not considered to contribute to the required thickness of the code complying 2 or 3 coat stucco system.
In complying with the above, code complying stucco with acrylic stucco coating is still considered to be a non-combustible cladding to meet the requirements of 9.10.15. for spatial separation since the acrylic is considered in the same manner as a paint onto cementitious stucco would be. In any other application, or if any of the conditions above are not complied with, the acrylic stucco must have a CCMC listing or be designed and construction reviewed by a professional engineer or architect.