



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN SPECIFYING “CLEAN” CAVITIES IN MASONRY CAVITY WALLS

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“Clean but not pristine” says it best when it comes to mortar droppings in the cavity.

Cavity walls are designed not only to guide any moisture occurring in the cavity to move downward to the flashing and weep vents, but also to allow a certain flow of air throughout the cavity.

Therefore:

A cavity should have adequate width and be relatively clean to accommodate both water travelling to the flashing and weep vents and to allow for air flow.

Code requirements call for a 1” minimum clear drainage cavity, we recommend 2” to allow for proper construction of the wall and to minimize mortar fins, droppings and bridging.

When a mason places a masonry unit with full and compacted head and bed joints, it is acceptable workmanship that a small amount of mortar may protrude slightly out of the cavity side of the joint.

A full head and bed joint in the masonry veneer is critical as the first line of defense against water penetration and for bond strength in the masonry.

While best practices teach the mason to minimize the mortar droppings, some will inevitably find their way into the cavity. The small amount of droppings will not hinder the performance of the envelope, and could even be considered a sign of a full mortar joint. While cavity inserts can be useful they are no substitute for good workmanship. A craftworker cannot be any less careful about managing mortar droppings. Contact a local IMI training program for proven mortar dropping control strategies at 1-800-JOBS-IMI.