

Experts Weigh in on Air Leakage Considerations for Contract Glaziers

Failure of the building envelope is a challenge for many, including contract glaziers. Air leakage is among those concerns.

Marcy Tyler, technical applications manager for Tremco, says North American building envelope repair is a multi-billion dollar industry and most problems are moisture-related, caused by air or moisture leakage.

"Most façade problems relate to terminations and connection details and 70 percent of all construction litigation is related to façade leakage," she says. She explains that most air leakage failures occur through walls with windows. It is not about the wall, she says, but about how dissimilar components come together.

Craig Carson, vice president of A-1 Glass Inc. in Englewood, Colo., says that

in learning more about how walls with openings actually perform, "It is obvious that there was energy loss at the window (or storefront, or curtainwall) perimeter conditions that needed to be addressed.

"Thinking of ourselves as building envelope contractors and not just glazing contractors forces us to be involved with the total design of the wall."

He points out that lack of a secure air barrier can ultimately be a concern for glaziers.

"Our experience with these new concepts demands that we install the glazing frames before the finish exterior wall product is installed ... We are seeing general acceptance of this change to the former means and methods of building walls," he says. "Our biggest

resistance had come from the masonry contractors, but as the architects and general contractors began to realize that this was the only practical way to properly seal the window systems, by having full access to the perimeter conditions, the masons have been forced to reevaluate their position and accept that their installation must follow the glazing."

Determining which party—the contract glazier or the water-proofer—ultimately is responsible for the air barrier is sometimes a challenge.

Carson says that A-1 simply accepts the responsibility for what it installs.

"However, we also make sure that testing of all materials is done in the manufacturers' labs and [we] double check [that] in the field," he says.

Survey Says Contractors to Hire More than Fire in 2011; Contract Glaziers Remain Unsure

According to the 2011 Construction Hiring and Business Outlook survey conducted by the Associated General Contractors of America and Navigant, this year for the first time in years many firms say they are planning to add more new staff than layoff current employees. But there is quite a bit of uncertainty regarding the labor market, as 53 percent reported they don't know or don't plan to change their staff size.

Jonathan Schuyler, preconstruction executive and partner with Giroux Glass Inc. in Las Vegas says they are starting to see a bit of light.

"Over the course of the past year

our work force has been reduced by 50 percent in the office and upwards of 75 percent in the field," Schuyler says. "In the past few months we have noticed an upward trend with respect to building as a whole, but nothing that would lead us to believe we will see an increase in office staff over the course of the next year ... In terms of overall growth, I do believe we will see an increase in the field of 5 to 10 percent based upon what we are seeing in preconstruction."

Jennifer Russell Vanasse is the vice president of the Window Shop Inc. in Plainville, Conn., a small, non-union operation. She feels that 2011 is going to

be another tough year for the glazing trade. Vanasse is starting to see a small increase in new project bidding, as well as some older projects out for re-bids.

"I also seem to be getting an increase in requests for bids from companies that I do not normally do work for. Whether that is because companies are closing or general contractors are price checking, I am not sure," she says. "We are trying to be competitive in a market where prices are really tight. However, we know our bottom line, which I feel is the key to a company's ultimate survival in a down market, like we are experiencing right now." ■