

Precast Panels **One Way to Get the Job Done Faster and Smarter**

With rising material, fuel and labor costs, the pressure to construct buildings faster, better and more economically is a major force in the commercial development sector as it's becoming harder for companies to turn a healthy profit. Opportunities are often lost as quickly as discovered due to the amount of time it takes to get a project rolling.

That's where panelization is an option. By taking some of the guesswork out the early stages of these projects, panelization can propel a job along at a rate that can't be attained with traditional construction methods. Why? Hand-laying brick and using materials such as modular glass require the kind of field labor and time that no developer can afford to pay for in time and money these days. The same goes for metal, laid-up fieldstone and other methods that for years have been used in lieu of panels.

That being said, a strong architectural design statement does not have to be sacrificed, as a myriad of architectural shapes, textures, colors and applica-

tions can be built into the panel. Finishes include metal, architectural precast, brick, terra cotta, EIFS, stone and ceramic tile.

In our market, architectural precast panels are enjoying great success, especially as its characteristics comply with green building codes. Regardless of the material selected, panels result in significant benefits in exchange for very few—if any—challenges on the job site. For starters, they allow for faster enclosure of the building, thus allowing follow-on trades to start their work. The work itself can be performed year round, which means no additional costs associated with wintertime work. Additionally, a higher quality of workmanship prevails, because the products are made in a manufacturing plant.

Speed of installation, ultimately, saves owners money as jobs are finished faster, meaning a quicker return on investment. And due to the lightweight nature of some panels, project owners can also save on foundation and structure costs.

Furthermore, some panel systems can be pre-insulated and have prefinished interiors that save time and money at the job site. Others come with preinstalled windows that help builders create cost savings by using manufacturing plant labor vs. field labor. Panels also come in a variety of colors, textures, shapes and designs that, in today's post-9/11 world, can even be designed to be blast proof.

Finally, many of today's panel systems have undergone independent testing confirming the panels' ability to withstand tornado-strength winds, hurricane-level water penetration, and earthquake-induced seismic tests. Others prevent air infiltration, which help meet new, tougher energy code requirements, such as those recently enacted in Massachusetts.

Ideal for new construction, exterior building renovations and recladding projects, precast panels present a more economical, faster way of creating high-quality exteriors at a reasonable price.

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