

AN AGE OLD DETAIL WHO'S TIME HAS PAST

When buildings are build with CMU block backer walls it is common to see the flashing hung in the mortar joint of the first or second course of the masonry. This detail is as old as cavity wall construction and belongs to an era when buildings were built in a single scaffolding. The reality today is that the backer wall is completed as fast as possible to allow the crews to get inside. The exterior veneer will go up weeks or even months later depending on the project. If your project starts in Minnesota in October, it is likely that the exterior veneer will not show up till spring.

These long delays between installing the flashing in the mortar joint of the backer wall and enclosing it, invariably lead to damaged flashing. Although this detail is very effective at stopping any moisture from finding the back side of the flashing, it comes at too great a risk. We hear all too often that the flashing above upper story windows left blowing in the breeze for months is beyond repair. The solution at that point is to hang a new piece with a termination bar.

Copper laminated flashings typically come in 3, 5 and 7 ounce weights and common sense would tell us that 7 is obviously better than 3. The reality is that 7 ounce is much more likely to survive installation without damage than 3 ounce, but 3 ounce will more likely deliver higher quality end dams and corners. The reasoning behind specifying 7 ounce is that you intend to hang the flashing in the mortar joint of the backer wall and no amount of insurance against damage is too much in that environment.

Best practices in today's climate demand the use of surface mounted termination bars allowing the brick mason to encase the flashing as close as is possible to the time it is installed. You can more than defer the cost of the termination bar by reducing the ounce weight of the copper laminate from 7 to 5 or 3. Since you are enclosing the flashing very near the time it is installed the likelihood of it being damaged is significantly reduced. The added benefit is that now the brick mason has been left with a brand new roll of a lighter weight flashing with which to perform all of the more delicate tasks such as end dams and corners. Use the mortar joint of the backer wall and the likelihood is high that we will get to sell you the flashing twice.

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