

TECHNICAL BULLETIN #7**CONTROL JOINTS**

Control joints are not to be confused with expansion joints which isolate structural movement. Control joints divide or limit the size of the plaster panel and are installed to provide stress relief of a plastered area. By creating an artificial separation in the plastered area, control joints help to dissipate the stresses that cause plaster to crack.

While control joints help to reduce the possibility of cracks occurring in the plaster, they do not eliminate all of the variables which can cause cracking. Control joints also function as a screed for a more uniform thickness and level surface of the plaster.

The strategic location of control joints helps to predetermine and pre-align with the joint most cracking caused by volume changes. Various recommendations will be found calling for control joints to create panels of approximately 100 square feet for soffits to 144 and 150 square feet for walls. For example in the *Plaster and Drywall Systems Manual, Metal Lath and Furring* section 10.24, page 125, it says, "For exterior Portland cement plaster, install control joints to create panels no larger than 144 sq. ft. with no dimension exceeding 18 ft., or a length to width ratio of 2 ½ to 1." In the same manual, however, on page 293, it calls for control joints to be installed to form a square of less than 150 sq. ft.

Thus it is apparent there is no consensus of the layout for control joints so the need for and placement of control joints in a particular project should be determined by the architect or designer.

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