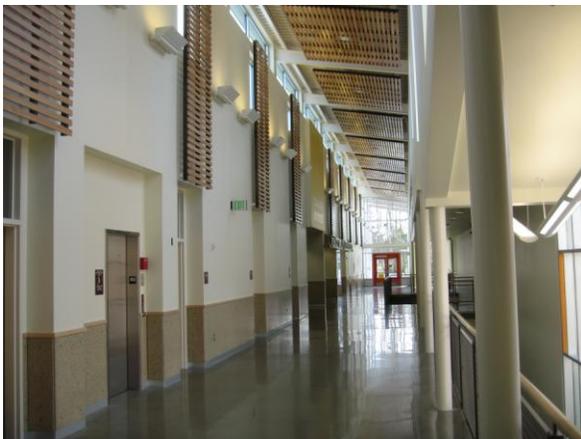


Finishing Non-Paper Faced Gypsum Wallboard

“Glass Mat” products have proven, over the years, to be a far superior exterior sheathing product to those with a paper facing. Building on that success and responding to the demands from the architectural community to provide an interior gypsum product that is impervious to the effects of moisture, mold and mildew, glass mat products have now been developed for interior use. Although these products perform very well when subjected to limited amounts of moisture, they present certain challenges when it comes to finishing.

The challenge seems to be in achieving a smooth transition from areas that have received joint compound, to that of the glass mat facing material. On standard paper faced drywall products, sanding the joint compound to create a smooth transition is relatively straightforward, in fact most manufacturer’s caution against over sanding. This appears to be just the opposite when it comes to glass mat products. Even though the manufacturer’s literature states that the glass mat products can be finished similar to paper-faced drywall, they stress the fact that these products must be “adequately sanded” to produce a smooth transition.



Due to the extraordinarily sturdy nature of the fiberglass mat, coupled with its rough texture, it is difficult to achieve that “smooth transition”. This fact becomes most apparent when the specifications have called for a Level 4 finish. Even under non-critical lighting conditions and when using flat or low sheen paints, the transition between compound and facing material is more discernable than on paper faced products.

This leads to the question of whether or not a Level 4 finish is appropriate, or should glass mat products be specified to receive a Level 5 finish only? The NWCB believes that a satisfactory finish can only be achieved by application of a Level 5 finish but this in itself raises a question on which method is most appropriate for achieving an acceptable Level 5 finish.

In general, the manufacturer's literature states that these product should be "finished in accordance with the most current version of GA-214", which recommends either a skim coat of joint compound **or** proprietary products specifically designed to achieve a Level 5 finish. Although the proprietary products perform very well on paper faced wallboard, they were not specifically designed for use on non-paper faced materials. Under critical lighting conditions and with high sheen or dark colored paints the areas that have received joint compound have a tendency to flash or telegraph, as if only a Level 4 finish had been applied.

To prevent this telegraphing, the NWCB recommends and the manufacturer's **technical literature** seems to recommend that the best method for achieving a Level 5 is by "skim coating the gypsum board surfaces". The skim coat method has the advantage of using joint compound to **fill** small imperfections and, when **sanded**, the light-fill provided by the joint compound results in a non-discernable transition and an acceptable Level 5 finish.

Regardless of the specified level of finish or whether the drywall is a glass mat or paper faced drywall product, the NWCB recommends that, **before** starting the finish work, construct a mock-up, in a sample-space room, demonstrating the specified surface appearance (level of finish **and** paint decoration) subjected to the lighting conditions under occupied conditions. The punch list process can often times become one of contentious debate, especially when it involves judging of the final decoration of gypsum wall board. Having an **approved** mock-up for comparison to the actual finished product can serve to eliminate or diminish subjective objectivity and prevent costly rework or exhaustive discourse.

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