Benefits of Natural Stone Panels

Biesanz Stone's panels are functional, beautiful, and stand the test of time.

By Colleen DeHart

They're lightweight.

Biesanz's panels are approximately one-third the weight of a precast concrete panel with the steel studs attached. It's a complete wall system, unlike precast panels, which require the addition of a stud wall. Natural stone panels are thinner, approximately two inches, whereas precast panels are six to eight inches. "They require a lot less structural members, structural steel, or concrete to support the structure because they are so lightweight on the project," says Todd Shaffer, head of drafting/design at Biesanz Stone. The lower weight of the panels also enables them to be easily lifted by a forklift or crane.

They're easy to install.

Installation is fast and easy. Each panel is designed specifically for the structure. Shaffer works with the architect's design to determine the prefabricated panels' dimensions and where anchors need to be placed. "Everything is predesigned to meet the structural members," Stahlecker says. Connections are designed to go floor heights. Installation rates are in accordance with design. Natural stone panels can cover more square footage in fewer panels, too. One large panel is approximately 8-by-14 feet. Approximately 700 to 1,000 square feet of natural stone panels can be installed in one day. Installation is less likely to be impacted by weather. And panels can still be set in weather that is 10 below zero, unlike typical masonry, which requires additional tenting and heating in colder temperatures, Stahlecker says.

They're high design.

Designers have many options when using natural stone panels. They can choose to use Biesanz's Minnesota Dolomite Limestone or go with another stone of their choice. "We build and design the panels in accordance with the architect's and customer's vision. If they choose Indiana Limestone, we purchase Indiana Limestone," Stahlecker says. Company logos or other designs can be applied to the panels. "Everything is predesigned to fit on the building," says Stahlecker. "Everything is designed to fit on the building, but concrete and other manufactured products may not last that long." Of course, stone is also a product that has stood the test of time. "We have a lot of projects that have been in existence since the 1980s, and we've had virtually no warranty work to do. The panels don't shrink or expand like other products," Stahlecker says. Concrete precast panels will absorb water over the years, placing stress on the panels over time. "Our stone won't change in a 50 to 100-year building; but concrete and other manufactured products may not last that long." They last.

Biesanz Stone is a single-source for engineering, design, fabricating, furnishing, and installing natural stone panels, speeding up the overall process. "We function as the subcontractor, overseeing and handling the install all under one umbrella," Stahlecker says. The company manages the complete system once it is in place. Being a one-stop shop allows the company to ensure installation is done at a high quality, meeting top industry standards.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF BIESANZ STONE