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INSPECTING THE BUILDING ENVELOPE

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Building owners must periodically take the appropriate measures to ensure the sky isn't falling around their facilities. By conducting 'building envelope surveys,' these professionals ensure all exterior components remain firmly in tact and pose no threat of falling from the facility.

In most instances, owners hire out specialized firms that perform building envelope inspections and supplementary services. This lengthy procedure often involves these firms taking hundreds of photos of existing conditions and translating the results into multiple binders of in-depth field reports and the images.

One technology provider believes it has the ability to effectively automate this process, essentially saving the service firms countless hours while also providing owners with a digital archive they can use for the long-term assessment of their buildings.

Technology from Construction Imaging & Archiving Inc. (CIA), www.constructionarchiving.com, San Diego, Calif., systematically documents construction projects using specialized hardware, software, and trained personnel. Through photographs, CIA documents construction projects on a daily, weekly, monthly, or as-needed basis. The photographs are uploaded to a secure project Website where clients can view them. The system visually identifies construction deficiencies which can be communicated to users through an online project archive. The issues can be tracked and corrected before they become a construction defect issue.

CIA recently worked with a building inspection firm as it performed a building envelope study for a large commercial high-rise. Using the technology, this firm was able to load and forensically tag photos of the building envelope on CIA's Website. This created a forum for which the company could quickly search and reference different locations of the façade. This generates a working model that allows for quick identification of problem areas on the building. "We were able to take the criteria for how (the company) grids out a building and incorporated it into our software," says Anthony Carnevale, with Construction Imaging & Archiving. He says such a procedure could help building envelope consulting firms market their services better to building owners. As opposed to showing up with binders full of paper, they can present an online archive of a building to the owner instead.