

Letters

Blame the Low Bid, Not the Roof

To the Editor:

I read with interest the article on page 7 of the May issue entitled "Flat-Roofed Schools Get Bad Rap in Mass."

Apparently, the sponsors of Bill H1080 did not thoroughly research flat-roof problems. If a roof is properly designed and if proper materials are specified, properly used and properly installed, that roof will *not* leak and will last as long as a sloped roof. I believe the sponsors are addressing the wrong problem, as not all flat roofs leak. I believe the problem is with the government's bidding requirements in having to accept the "low bidder."

If there are a few bad or questionable legislators, are we to condemn and do away with the entire legislature?

Jack B. Glassman
ACA Products
Swampscott, Mass.

It's About Time

To the Editor:

At long last!! A table of contents!

Thank you for finally adding a badly needed reference feature to your excellent publication.

Esther K. Friedmann
Library Director
Johnson Technical Institute
Scranton, Pa.

More on Crinkling Tyvek

To the Editor:

Having left Tyvek over rough openings until the windows were installed, I agree with Bill Coyne (Letters, April issue) that the material sounds *horrible* (putting it mildly) when it "crinkles" in the wind. The noise would be completely unacceptable if it could be heard by the occupants after completion, and it definitely would be a heck of a callback.

However, if the purpose of installing Tyvek on top of the rafters is to prevent wind infiltration into the fiberglass while allowing the roof to breathe (i.e., vent moisture), I would question whether Tyvek is necessary over the blueboard. Extruded polystyrene boards are tongue and groove at the edges and would prevent air infiltration all by themselves, so the additional layer of Tyvek just adds extra expense.

On the other hand, sheathing the rafters with blueboard would create an exterior vapor dam unless the sheets were laid with small gaps between them

to allow moisture to escape. In such a case, I suppose you might consider using the Tyvek.

Laying the boards tightly together could trap moisture within the roof cavity, but experience with wall construction seems to indicate that polystyrene foam sheathing does not cause condensation problems. Apparently the foam layer keeps the entire cavity above the dew-point temperature. Perhaps the same would be true for roof applications. To keep the roof surface cool and fight ice dams, venting above the blueboard still would be desirable, however.

There's got to be a better detail for controlling air infiltration into fiberglass roof insulation. Perhaps the Canadian material that has the Tyvek bonded to the fiberglass is the answer. Or maybe using a layer of Homasote instead of blueboard. Or (spare me!) stapling a layer of chicken wire above the Tyvek to prevent audible popping in the wind (but would the wire rust?).

One final note: Tyvek is so slippery that I would hate to be slithering around on a roof that was covered by the stuff.

Paul Hanke
Plainfield, Vt.

To the Editor:

On reading the April issue, I was amazed to see the letter from Bill Coyne [in which he describes his technique for installing Tyvek]. We have been using a method similar to this for seven years, but our technique uses insulating sheathing board and works just fine.

When this method is properly followed, I fail to see the benefit of using Tyvek. Furthermore, it has to be much harder to work with. To me, Tyvek is a crutch to use when other materials aren't installed properly or are impossible to get airtight.

Our ventilating system works equally well on flat or hip-and-valley roofs. Another advantage is the ability to go around obstructions, such as roof openings, fireplaces, etc. The added R-value, the "minimal air infiltration," plus the compensation for poorly installed insulation are just some of the benefits. Our roof system has to be the roof of the future. (For years now, we have called this system the "Joe Roof," and I now have a patent pending on it.)

Joe Forrest
Forrest Construction
Somerset, Ill.

Chewed-Up Polystyrene

To the Editor:

Here's one more story about ants and polystyrene (blueboard) you can add to

your growing file of information.

Last year (late May/early June) I heard a suspicious scraping sound in the ceiling of my one-story shed-roof addition. At first I thought it might be a swarm of hornets trying to set up house in the unscreened (at that time) vent space above the ceiling. I dutifully sprayed in a long-shot hornet killer as best I could, and indeed the sound did seem to subside for a week or so. When the noise returned, I sprayed again, and again the noise ceased. Also at this time I went away on a 10-day vacation.

When I returned home, I found a small pile of blueboard dust on the floor beneath the one area of ceiling that had been left unsheetrocked. This made me highly suspicious, and I proceeded to excavate. Needless to say, I found ants—hundreds of them—channelling through the blueboard insulation, though the rafters had remained relatively untouched.

I excavated and sprayed, excavated and sprayed, with dying, writhing ants falling in my face, until I had removed all the polystyrene I could without having to tear down sheetrock. Fortunately, the ants seemed to be confined to the area that was left unfinished.

I took my problem to the University of Vermont Extension Service, which had never encountered such an occurrence, though it was helpful in identifying the ants (black head, red thorax, black abdomen) as a lesser species of carpenter ants.

And I found the source of the problem in my woodpile—in some cherry logs from an ant-infested tree stacked beneath my eaves. I was fortunate enough while removing the logs to spot the queen, and killed her along with hundreds of others. I left the blueboard exposed all summer as a check. Finally, I re-insulated that section of the ceiling, and since then I have had no problem.

Still, you can't imagine my surprise when I saw that first picture of ant-infested polystyrene in the February issue. I was both shocked and relieved to find out this was not an isolated bizarre occurrence, but rather a *shared* bizarre occurrence.

Keep up the good work and free flow of information.

Dennis Darrah
Montpelier, Vt.

Keep 'em coming....*New England Builder* welcomes letters from our readers. Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. Letters should be sent to *NEB*, P.O. Box 278, Montpelier, Vt. 05602.