Letters to the Editor

New England Builder welcomes letters from its readers. Letters must be signed and include the writer's address.

An Index, Please

To the Editor:

Now that I have several years of *New England Builder,* I could really use an index to the articles. You could offer to sell it to your subscribers, since compiling an index is not cheap.

Please consider this possibility for those of us who remember we "read it somewhere" but can't find the original article

Warren King
Milton, Mass.

Thanks for the suggestion. Unfortunately, it's no easier than it is cheap—but we're working on it. We hope we won't keep you waiting too long. —Ed.

Heavy Metal?

To the Editor:

I would like more articles on building—finish carpentry, renovations, cabinet making, etc.—and not so much talk on legal or engineering problems. And not building with metal! That's not carpentry work.

M. D'Angelo
Bronx, N.Y.

Tyvek Techniques

To the Editor:

I was interested to see that somebody finally questioned the practice of wrapping Tyvek over a plywood building ("On the House," November issue).

If a Tyvek tape were used, it would seem that it would have to be wide enough to cover the joint (leaving space for adhesive or stapling on both sides of the joint), because most adhesives would create vapor barriers and possibly cause more problems than they solve.

At approximately seven cents per square foot, wrapping the whole house is not a major cost—but when you add in the installation labor and, more importantly, the safety hazard involved in siding over Tyvek, you may be adding substantial cost/risk to your building endeavor.

If Tyvek is going to be used as a house wrap, then how about getting DuPont to dye it a dark color so that its reflection won't blind us when siding over it.

If DuPont will do that, then it could easily be used to solve the cathedral- ceiling dilemma. Size rafters/truss-joists for the amount 'of fiberglass insulation needed, and then cover the roof frame with Tyvek from peak to eave. Two loops around the roll enables slow unrolling if the top of the sheet is secured to the ridge.

If Tyvek is going to be used as a house wrap, then how about getting DuPont to dye it a dark color so that its reflection won't blind us when siding over it?

Allow excess at the eave to wrap under soffit to top plate of wall. Then install furring/batten strips to secure Tyvek to the rafters. These furring strips will provide the necessary air space between the Tyvek and the sheathing.

It must be remembered that installing Tyvek on an unstable structure will create a large sail area (that's what it's for: to stop air). I recommend plumbing end walls, ensuring that there is adequate bracing and then installing Tyvek starting at the midsection of the building. Pyramid the plywood sheathing, and nail furring and straighten rafters as you go.

The lower edge of the plywood should overhang, depending on the thickness of the furring, because you will need to install furring scraps to the rafter tails to provide an air channel behind the fascia board. Later, friction-fit batts can be installed without compromising the air channel.

Richard W. Cobbs
American Inspection Services
North Amherst, Mass.

Roof Venting Revisited

To the Editor:

Bill Lotz recently wrote that it is not necessary to vent the roof. Other writers in *New England Builder* have stated that roof venting is essential, even with a good vapor barrier.

Have any tests been run that can resolve the controversy?

Bob Apsler
Westwood, Mass.

Bill Lotz responds:

Attic venting is required to remove large quantities of vapor in houses with little or no vapor barrier. Where a good-quality application of poly is installed in the ceiling, there is no vapor in the attic to vent. The only test I know of is in my own attic, which has a good poly vapor barrier: no moisture and no ventilation for the past 10 years.

Chimney Liner Update

To the Editor:

Since I wrote my article that was published in the December issue ("Understanding the Standards," page 25), the Homesaver flexible stainless steel relining pipe has been tested and listed to UL 103HT, the standard for high-temperature chimneys.

The pipe is available in all standard diameters and comes in 5- and 25-foot lengths. Manufactured of four-ply, .018" 304 stainless steel, it is uniquely interlocked to increase flexibility.

The liner is available from Copperfield Chimney Supply, Inc, P. O. Box 664. Fairfield, IA 52556; phone (515)472-4126.

John Florian
Editor
Alternative Energy Retailer

Good Bookkeeping Is a Must

To the Editor:

I have been reading *New England Builder* for the past few years and feel that it is the finest publication of its type. Your scope of information is sensitive to the everyday problems and needs of most small builders.

About two years ago, my partner and I decided to involve ourselves mainly in commercial projects because we wanted our business to grow. It was my responsibility to find new projects, and it was my partner's responsibility to build them. Since that time I have learned much.

During the past two years, I have set up a new computerized bookkeeping system using the "Lotus" program. I learned two very important things while going through the necessary steps of reorganizing our books: First, that bookkeeping is an essential part of a well-run, well-organized business; second, that a major problem with our company (and probably most small construction companies) is that we do little or no job costing.

In other words, after we work up an estimate, are awarded the job and build the project, we rarely know where our estimate was wrong—and I'm not talking about being wrong on the *high* side.

Having been a hands-on builder for nearly 15 years, I realize that most builders are consumed by the business. They have to be bookkeeper, estimator, job supervisor, banker and, yes, politician. Most survive by instinct alone.

Jeff Tallman
Weston, Conn.

Bathroom Ventilation

To the Editor:

In the October issue, I find it interesting that Bill Lotz's recommendations for bathroom ventilation (80 to 100 cubic feet per minute) are *at least* twice as high for the largest room he fits in this range (8' x 8') as the 5 air-changes-per-hour (ACH) index he recommends for larger rooms.

The room would have to be more than twice as big to go beyond 100 cfm at a 5 ACH rate.

Chuck Eberdt
W.E.E.S., Seattle University
Seattle, Wash.

Bill Lotz responds:

Five ACH per hour is the absolute minimum required; some codes require more. Check your local code. My experience is that it is more cost-effective to run a 10 or 20 ACH fan for five to 10 minutes instead of 5 ACH for 24 hours a day.

Learning the Easy Way

To the Editor:

It certainly is nice that you people are working so hard to disseminate information. There are so many hard ways to learn. Thanks for making it a little easier.

As a shop teacher in Maine, I'd like to see you address what constitutes "entry-level skills" in the building industry. It would be of great value to me and my students.

G. Scott Shepard
Blue Hill, Maine

The Check Arrives

To the Editor:

Despite what other disagreements I may have with Bill Lotz, his column on consultants (November issue) was like a "check in the mail" that had finally arrived.

Communication *is* the key—at the beginning, during the course of construction and at final payment

Jim Maloney
Touchstone Resources
Eugene, Ore.

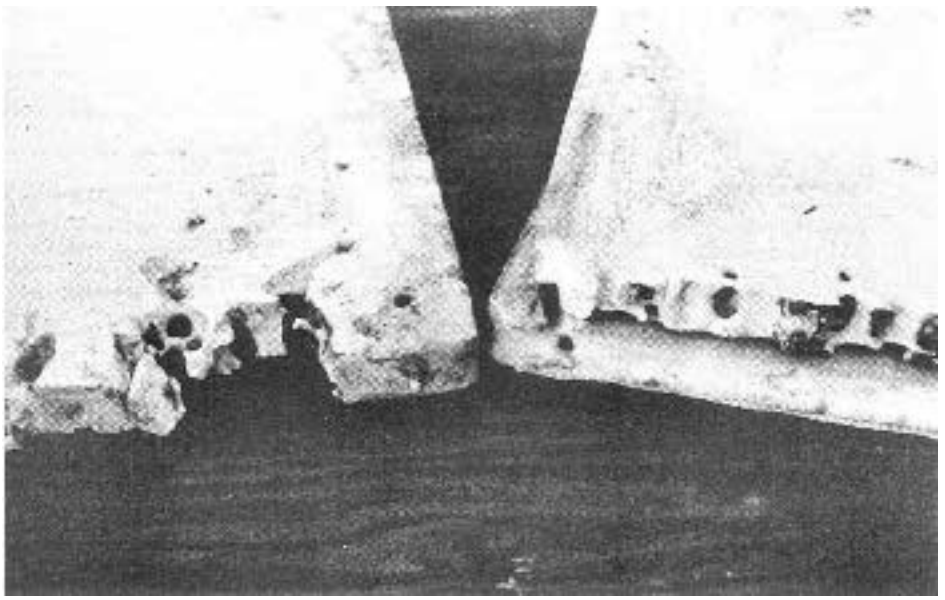
CSI Standards

To the Editor:

In regard to Raymond DiPasquale's article in the November issue, where could I obtain a copy of the Construction Specification Institute (CSI) standard format?

Dave Minch
Saugerties, N.Y.

CSI's master guide specification, known as "Spectext," is available from CSI, 601 Madison Ave., Alexandria, VA 22314; phone (703)684-0300. It is provided in the 16-division format recognized as a standard in the industry. The complete library costs $1,475; the architect's library (divisions 1 to 14) is $1,100, and the mechanical/electrical library (divisions 1, 15 and 16) is $425. It also is available in software (along with a hard copy) from Bowne Information Systems in New York, phone (212)986-0744. -Ed. •



We all know that ants don't bother polystyrene insulation, right? As the photo above shows, that may be true only in the lab. The insulation was used to retrofit the foundation of an old farmhouse in Maine (no, not Bill Lotz's), and the culprits weren't carpenter ants, but common "red and black" ants. Does anyone out there know how to protect against this problem, why it occurs, if the ants actually "eat" the material, whether it occurs only in Maine, etc.?