

Letters

Furnaces Not Flawed

To the Editor:

I read with great interest the article in the August issue by Gary Nelson on the flaws in superinsulated construction. In particular I was shocked to read of the eight condensing furnaces with corroded heat exchangers. As a Lennox dealer I have been installing The Lennox Pulse combustion furnace since 1982. Since then we have installed over 150 of them with not one heat exchanger failure. In fact, Lennox has extended the warranty from 20 years to a limited lifetime warranty on the heat exchanger.

Based on our experience the furnaces that failed in that study must have been installed improperly or were simply inferior products to begin with.

Ray Bennett
Frontier Fuel Savers
East Whately, Mass.

Of the 24 houses we looked at, two had had their condensing furnaces replaced due to corrosion. The furnaces, made by the now defunct Tappan/Janitrol, had been replaced sometime between 1981 and 1985 (when we looked at the houses) with furnaces made by Arkla Recuperative furnaces (Arkla had bought the bankrupt Tappan/Janitrol).

Six other houses built according to the same plans (but not in the study) also had failures with Tappan/Janitrol furnaces. Of the other houses in the study with condensing furnaces, some had no apparent problems while others

had corrosion visible on the exhaust vent pipe where it connects to the draft-induction fan.

The consistent failures with this unit would support Mr. Bennett's contention that the product was inferior.

—Author Gary Nelson

Brick Doesn't Burn

To the Editor:

We wish to comment on the article published in your August 1987 issue regarding zero-clearance fireplaces.

Mr. Menia makes some very good and valid points in his article about zero-clearance fireplaces that cannot be disputed. Zero-clearance fireplaces are easy to construct, they come preassembled, and their initial cost is less expensive. However, the article makes many careless assumptions about these fireplaces that could give the reader a false sense of security.

Zero-clearance fireplaces have the greatest problems occurring during installation. These problems occur from bad material and poor installation. Once the fireplace is completed and then framed, failure of the unit may not occur until five or more years later. The home may have been sold and the installer long gone, but the homeowner is still left with nothing. Masonry on the other hand will not burn even if installed improperly. It is versatile and aesthetically more pleasing to the eye than metal.

Readers must understand that metal fireplaces no matter how

durable or long lasting will corrode, bend, warp, and deteriorate. Brick lasts forever.

Walter Galanty, Jr.
National Assoc. of Brick Dist.
Alexandria, Va.

Another Chimney Reliner

To the Editor:

One of our representatives in the U.S. saw an article ["Chimney Relining Options," 9/87] on how to insert flue liners in an old chimney. Several years ago, we invented such an instrument, called the "Gripper," which we think is the best on the market today. It's easy to operate and, above all, safety is the key factor.

The gripper is a device used to lower flue tile down an existing chimney. It is used in conjunction with our interlocking clay flue tile. The interlocking joint precisely aligns one liner section with another.

Incidentally, we have distributors and dealers all over the New England States as our clients.

Marcel Beauchamp
Montreal Terra Cotta
St. Laurent, Quebec

Electrical Fluff

To the Editor:

Hey, I always had a sneaking suspicion that electricians are *prima donnas* at heart, and David Shapiro's article does nothing but reinforce this notion.

I could write a whole article on how to cut holes in sheetrock when rewiring an older house, and no, bashing holes with a hammer is not high on my list (now you know why electricians carry hammers). But who needs to deal with these attitudes? Not me and not you.

You've got a good magazine going. Don't worry about how thick or thin each issue is, as long as you keep it hard-hitting. Just stay away from the filler and the fluff, like Shapiro's article. It may be fattening, but it doesn't go down well.

Dennis Darrah
Montpelier, Vt.



Keep 'em coming... We welcome letters, but they must be signed and include the writer's address. *New England Builder* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length and clarity. Mail letters to *NEB*, P.O. Box 5059, Burlington, Vt. 05402.

Editorial

What's That You Said?

When I go to the movies, I often find myself saying "Psst, what did they say?" The reason, I found out a few years ago, was irreversible high-frequency hearing loss—due probably to exposure to power tool noise. The audiologist urged me to wear hearing protection from that moment on when exposed to loud noise, or risk further impairment.

In my ten years in remodeling and cabinetwork ending in 1982, I never wore hearing protection. I wore respiratory protection (nuisance dust masks) occasionally on particularly dusty jobs such as demolition, and I wore an organic-vapor respirator the last couple of years when I worked with solvent-based contact cement. I worked with contact cement on plastic laminates many times without the mask: once I nearly got knocked out from the stuff while working in an enclosed space in winter with no ventilation. The building was unheated and we had to keep it warm for the adhesive to set up.

Like many remodelers, I've also been exposed to friable asbestos—before I knew better—and various

and sundry other questionable materials.

And I had a good old-fashioned lower-back injury that took a good four years to heal. It was due to a fairly dumb lifting accident—taking a piece of 3/4-inch plywood up a ladder by myself on a windy day.

The worst injuries sustained by my employees were a scarred eye due to plaster demolition (no goggles) and a finger tip through the table saw (no push stick). The damage was just a few stitches, thankfully. On the bright side, neither I nor any employee ever fell off staging, lost a finger, broke a bone, or filed a lawsuit.

Most of my foolishness occurred while I was in my twenties—an age when the childhood sense of immortality is still with us. I'm older and, I think, wiser now. All in all, I consider myself lucky to have come out relatively unscathed.

We all know people who weren't so lucky. For them, the cost of learning about safety was very high. Let's hope it isn't for you. ■

—S.B.