

Letters

Ban on "Styrofoam" Questioned

To the Editor:

In reference to your article, "Vermont Governor Nixes Styrofoam," [12/87, p.7] does this mean Styrofoam or beadboard can no longer be used in the construction of new buildings, such as is used on exterior-insulation wall systems?

Ray Nurse
Auburn, Mass.

To the Editor:

The latest issue of *New England Builder* contains an item in its Miscellany section that causes me great concern. I am referring to the article that references [Vt. Governor Kunin's] press release on Styrofoam. As Styrofoam is no longer a specific product made by Dow Chemical but rather a generic one describing virtually everything made of white foam, [the Governor] has tainted an entire industry, not just the one [she] apparently wanted to ban. As we manufacture a product that is being tainted by the 'shotgun' nature of these remarks, I take great exception to them!

The materials that [the Governor] is trying to ban are those that use chlorofluorocarbons, such as Freon, as an expander. An excellent example of this would be the plates, cups, and containers used at McDonalds, since they are made of extruded polystyrene in a process that uses Freon as an expander. Products such as ours, while sharing an appearance with polystyrene, are totally different. Our product uses water-based steam to expand small styrene beads, containing pentane, a non-chlorofluorocarbon-based chemical that reacts basically the same as popcorn, to create the expanded foam that we use as an insulator.

Robert J. Rydeen, CEO
Unijoint International
Brentwood, N.H.

The Vermont governor's order applies only to state purchasing departments and only to foam cups, bowls, and plates.

According to administrative aide George Hamilton, these products were singled out because: 1) they are non-biodegradable, 2) or they are made with Freon (CFCs) that damages the ozone layer, and 3) they have a readily available substitute-paper. The ruling does not address building products or any other use of foam plastics.

Although the original ruling used the term "Styrofoam," it now refers to the banned material as "polystyrene." In fact, Styrofoam is a trademark of the Dow Chemical Co., and Dow has never made food containers. Sorry, there is no such thing as a "Styrofoam cup." Foam cups are made from beadboard. As for bowls, plates, and hamburger boxes, some are made with CFCs, some aren't.

To clarify the situation further: Styrofoam, Foamular, Amofoam, and other "extruded polystyrene" insulation

boards are expanded with Freon gas. Some Freon escapes during manufacture and shortly thereafter, and most remains trapped in the cells — unless the material is burned or crushed. The same is true for urethane and isocyanurate foams, which are found in foil-faced sheathings and commercial roof insulation.

The other type of polystyrene foam, called "beadboard" (molded-bead expanded polystyrene) is expanded with pentane, not Freon. That is presumably the product used in the Unijoint panels.

Products using Freon may be affected by a proposed EPA restriction on five types of CFCs and two halons (used in large fire-extinguisher systems). The proposal, if adopted, would freeze production levels until 1993, then cut production by 50 percent by 1998. —Ed.

Developers Have Responsibilities

To the Editor:

I think you should have been less jubilant about the Supreme Court Decision on "linkage" and "taking" ("Builders Win in Supreme Court Decisions," 9/87). I agree that developers have rights but they also have a responsibility to create environments that are in harmony with their surroundings and with the people who live and work nearby. I also think that the developer should house families that are displaced because of the development.

R.G. McIntosh
Cambridge, N.Y.

Home Inspection Info

To the Editor:

I read with interest Michael Lennon's article in *New England Builder* on "Misreading a House." I am currently in the process of establishing an inspection service in this area and am having difficulty obtaining information. I realize it is an up-and-coming area of business in the Southeast and he seems to have the expertise. Any help he could supply would be appreciated.

Michael Conley
Anna Maria, Fla.

Michael Lennon replies:

HomePro Systems Inc., has the following publications and services to offer to those interested in the home inspection business:

The prepackaged home-inspection HomeBook system (detailing all maintenance and 600 problems) sells to the home-inspection industry at a discount of \$50 plus \$2.50 for shipping and handling. This is also available at a wholesale price to qualified businesses to use as the inspection report in their own businesses.

Home Inspections & Marketing, an Insider's Proven Secrets to Maximize Growth is approximately 100 pages on the practical methods of making a home-

inspection business succeed (\$20 plus \$1.25 shipping and handling). These are the techniques we have used to get up to 256 home inspections in a week in our home office.

Training Manual for Home Inspectors in the Field: The Nuts and Bolts of the Industry is another approximately 100 pages on the very deliberate and exacting routines that promote comprehensive inspections in buildings. A large number of systematic mental checklists are provided. These are the techniques that have enabled me to perform more than 10,000 individual building inspection without a single major claim (\$20 plus \$1.25 shipping and handling).

Hundreds of slides, each with a narrative script, which provide a rapid visual-identification learning experience are available for purchase or lease.

We offer an ongoing (every other week) five-day field course in home inspecting. The course is limited to 6 people at a time and is about 60 hours in length. We also offer a variety of back-to-back two-day seminars, which cover the full spectrum of what professional home inspectors need to know and what is new to the industry.

Three other books are in the works that will make life easier for professional home inspectors. For information, write HomePro Systems, Inc., 110 W. Great Falls St., Falls Church, VA 22046.

Don't Knock Replacement Windows

To the Editor:

I recently read the December issue of *New England Builder*. It is a very well written magazine with a wealth of good information. I do have a slight problem with Walter Jowers' obvious disdain for vinyl replacement windows. It is not true that replacement windows "wreck the interior and exterior finishes" of clients' homes. In fact, in most cases, there are no structural changes and the trim is not changed. Furthermore, the benefits of replacing those old wood single pane windows with maintenance-free vinyl thermal panes that tilt in for cleaning far outweigh any kind of new interior trim. I'm sure Mr. Jowers is a very qualified remodeler, but I wonder just how many replacement windows he's installed.

Dwight A. Musselman, VP
Amwinc
Allentown, Pa.



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.

Truss Bracing Not Just Academic

To the Editor:

Your May 1987 article on Truss Bracing was interesting but academic until yesterday's local paper arrived (*Central Maine Morning Sentinel*, November 3, 1987).

A front-page article (photo below) describes the injuries suffered by an electrician's helper in the collapse of a 250-foot long building under construction in Madison, Maine. To quote the article, "...the unusually large building was built with 82-foot trusses of Southern Yellow Pine, the longest trusses that could be transported over Maine highways." The

article also states that "the [building's owner] said 'wind was a factor' in the building collapse, but he declined more comment on why the building folded." It is hard to tell from the accompanying photo if inadequate temporary bracing was the cause, but it seems likely.

Thank you for an informative, interesting publication. As promoters of energy-efficient residential (and commercial) construction, my co-workers and I find most every issue provides insights and answers that are hard to find elsewhere.

Katherine E. Alexander
Central Maine Power
Augusta, Me.

