

# Asbestos Handling Guidelines Valuable

**Asbestos Handbook for Remodeling** by the National Association of Homebuilders, 15th and M Streets NW, Washington, DC 20005; 1989, 94 pages; \$14.80 for members, \$18.50 for non-members, paperback.

Last year while doing some renovation work on a house we own, my wife and I found vermiculite insulation between floors, which I had read may contain asbestos. With great trepidation I sent a sample off to be tested, fully expecting that it could cost more than the building was worth to get rid of the stuff. Fortunately the test came back negative, but if you aren't so lucky, or if you think you may encounter asbestos-containing products on a job, you'll be well prepared if you've read the NAHB's *Asbestos Handbook for Remodeling*. The book was prepared by the NAHB to give remodelers a broad overview of both the perils of asbestos and abatement strategies. The authors emphasize repeatedly that remodelers should not, under any circumstances, attempt removal themselves, but—short of describing forbidden procedures—they do an admirable job of shedding some light on every aspect of the subject.

In a brief opening salvo, readers are informed of the difference between friable and nonfriable asbestos, the value of pre-bid inspections, critical contract provisions, testing where necessary, and the importance of keeping workers informed.

Over the years, asbestos has been used in over 8,000 products. The book helps you identify some of them by description, field photos, and a helpful table. The EPA estimates friable asbestos is present in 20% of all public and commercial buildings, and 35% of schools—where it was once mandated by code for fire protection. In response, the asbestos removal industry, and regulations governing it, are proliferating. The text and several appendices outline EPA, OSHA, Consumer Product Safety Commission, and other regulations, including coverage of such areas as exposure limits, transportation, protective gear, medical surveillance, record keeping, exemptions, and state/local asbestos-related activities.

One interesting point made about identifying asbestos-containing products is that inability to recognize them is not a legal defense against liability claims. Indeed, insurance may be hard to get, or it will not cover you in the long run. Therefore remodelers must be able to determine when they are facing a problem. To this end, training courses are recommended, testing methods described, and tips are provided on how to select both asbestos consultants and abatement contractors (separate entities to avoid a conflict of interest).

A thumbnail introduction to abatement procedures is given (including ongoing maintenance), encapsulation (with chemical sealants), enclosure, and removal—which for regulatory and legal reasons should only be carried out by licensed personnel in most cases. If you wish to limit your risks and avoid the fate of the remodeler who found himself facing a multi-million dollar lawsuit after tearing out and sanding an asbestos-containing

vinyl floor, read this book. It's the cheapest preventative medicine I can imagine.

## Estimating Book For Interiors Only

**Means Interior Estimating** by Alan E. Lew, R.S. Means Company, Inc., 100 Construction Plaza, Kingston, MA 02364; 1989, 265 pages; \$44.95, 8 1/2 x 11 hardcover.

As most JLC readers probably know, R.S. Means Company publishes a wide spectrum of estimating data references. This book, however, focuses on estimating interior work. Tables, forms, and illustrations from other Means titles illustrate the book, but if you want to use Means' data sources, you'll have to purchase other volumes.

Section I outlines the components of typical interior jobs, from demolition to finish work, including specialties such as conveying systems and furniture. Sometimes this information is quite detailed—such as the inclusion of a formula for determining carpet density. At other times it's bonehead basic—such as the description of what wood is. Typically it is a very general outline of things you would want to consider in estimating various aspects of a job.

Section II tackles the estimating process from general conditions, pre-bid meetings, and walk-throughs to takeoffs, pricing (direct versus indirect costs), and final tabulating and checking. This material is probably at least as useful to the novice estimator as the longer first section. The final three chapters apply the previous material to specific examples such as a hotel suite.

My overall impression was that this book would perhaps be a good (if expensive) text for a course on estimating, but as a sole reference on the subject I found too much material devoted to matters such as the variety of metal stud types at the expense of the nuts and bolts of estimating.

## DIY Handbook May Help Builders

**Decorating With Paint and Wall Covering** by Black & Decker, Cy DeCosse Inc., 5900 Oak Drive, Minnetonka, MN 55343; 1989, 125 pages; \$11.95, 8 1/2 x 11 hardcover.

Colorful, clear, and concise are the words to describe this volume in Black & Decker's "Home Improvement Library." Written primarily for do-it-yourselfers, professional builders will also find this introduction to painting, decorating, and wallpapering to be useful and informative.

One section introduces color theory and describes the effects of light versus dark tones, warm versus cool hues, borders, patterns, textures, and color schemes. Another outlines

preparation (from tools and materials to protection techniques), removing wallpaper, repair methods, and dealing with existing stains and mildew to application of primers and sealants. Many areas of finish painting are covered, from choosing basic and specialty tools to brush and roller technique, trim, and final cleanup. The book closes with sections on choosing wallpaper, estimating, application on walls and ceilings, and how to cope with corners, openings, protrusions, and borders.

Useful tips pop up throughout the text—such as the reminder to turn off the forced-air heating system while painting to minimize dust. Many clear, bright, full-color illustrations supplement the text. It would be hard to find a better how-to introduction.

## Videotapes on Stair Framing, Installing Trim

**Stair Framing Video** by Ken Todd, Craftsman Book Co., 6058 Corte Del Cedro, Carlsbad, CA 92009; 1989, 60 minute color video; \$24.75.

**Installing Trim** with Craig Savage, A Fine Homebuilding Video Workshop from Taunton Press, Box 355, Newtown, CT 06470; 60 minute color video; \$29.95.

At the outset of *Stair Framing Video*, host Ken Todd declares that viewers should be able to lay out and build residential stairs after seeing the tape. I agree that you'll achieve that goal—if you don't fall asleep first. Mr. Todd's presentation is identical in tone and type to the dreary Craftsman plasterboard video I reviewed last year. The star speaks in slow, careful, measured tones while sitting in front of a blank background and rhythmically turning back-and-forth to face separate cameras with the regularity of a metronome (when he's not in action cutting the stairs, that is).

If you can endure an hour of this somnolent format, you'll know how to lay out and cut a straight run of stairs, and install them in a manner that will minimize squeaking. Mr. Todd presents stair math in a very clear, logical manner, reinforced by graphics (including equations) on the screen. It's lucky that subtitles appear, since the host does not say what he means on several occasions, such as when he says he'll have to convert "9.35 to all inches" when he clearly means 9 feet 3.5 inches. Better editing should have removed this and a few other bloopers. Overall though, even a rank amateur should be able to build a straight run of rough stairs using this video, and pick up some tricks of the trade along the way. However, you won't learn about landings, winders, finish work (treads and risers are plywood), or even how to adjust for unequal floor thicknesses (which Mr. Todd curiously says you should read up on in the appropriate chapter of his carpentry book).

For people who learn better from seeing a demonstration than from reading a book, this video may be the ticket, but Craftsman should definitely look for a new video director.

In stark contrast is *Fine Homebuilding's Installing Trim* video with Craig Savage. It's well-paced, informative, and holds your interest from Mr. Savage's opening anecdote to his parting advice that you should always

remember to "buy a few extra pieces of molding." Moreover, Mr. Savage exhibits a high level of skill in his work—enough, I think to instill a real sense of pride and responsibility in his viewers.

At the same time, the film's host acknowledges the existence of production carpentry techniques, and shows you a few, along with many problem-solving methods.

In about an hour you'll learn how to cut butt-, miter-, and coped points, and make a picture frame casing with a clamshell molding. You'll also learn how to "worry-in" your final piece, scribe with a "preacher," use paper shims to fine-tune toe and heel alignment in a mitered joint, install tiny mitered returns on the ends of an apron, cut inside and outside corners in baseboard (single piece and built-up types) and crown molding, and how to fit an obtuse corner. You'll learn how to make a tapered backsided rabbit (to fit an out-of-whack jamb), fudge an out-of-level head casing (so it at least looks level), and scribe to an irregular floor. The video also shows when to use the "upside down and backwards" rule, and many other handy real-world tips. All of it is well presented.

A few flaws do mar the performance, though. Examples include Mr. Savage's failure to define terms such as "rabbit," too little information on installing jamb extenders, and no explanations of why a butted head casing should run by the side pieces. You also see a section of wainscoting and chair rail in place on the demonstration wall, but there's no explanation of how to install them. All these points are minor, however.

A companion book (see JLC, 9/89) is also available, and each sequence of the tape is keyed to the appropriate pages in the book.—Paul Hanke

## Free & Cheap

**Squelching Squeaks:** Part of the Builder Tips series from the American Plywood Association, *Steps to Construct a Solid, Squeak-free Floor System* outlines proper installation methods to avoid floor squeaks, buckling, and nail popping problems. This free leaflet also includes a table of panel recommendations for APA glued floor systems, and cut-away drawings of a floor system and tongue-and-groove joint spacing. Request form Q300 from the American Plywood Association, P.O. Box 11700, Tacoma, WA 98411; 206/565-6600.

**New Life for Old Floors:** *Resurfacing Concrete Floors*, an eight-page booklet from the Portland Cement Association, covers new and traditional options for resurfacing old, worn concrete floors. The booklet details the self-leveling approach, as well as unbonded and fully or partially bonded overlays. Cleaning and preparation methods; mix and material requirements; and steps from placing to curing are covered. To order, send \$3 to PCA, Order Processing, 5420 Old Orchard Road, Skokie, IL 60077-1083; 708/966-9559.

**Rehab Standards:** The National Park Service distributes a 60-page booklet called *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation with Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. This booklet helps "certified building" owners meet federal tax credit requirements and is useful for builders and owners wanting to rehabilitate with sensitivity to historic materials and features. Accompanying guidelines recommend responsible methods and approaches, and list treatments that should be avoided. To order, send \$2 to Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402-9325.