

Letters



OSB Warning

To the Editor:

Larry Schmuckler's article, "OSB: Job-Site Report" (*JLC*, 4/90), describes his use of oriented-strand board (OSB). In it, he acknowledges that the exterior grade OSB he uses for floors and roofs does not always withstand one soaking. He then continues to mention that he had to sand the board in one case, presumably to get a smooth surface for installation of the covering materials, and that other boards delaminated.

OSB should not be used in locations where repeated wetting is likely, for the reasons of delamination and swelling, as Mr. Schmuckler observed. Such installations include roof decks and floors of bathrooms, kitchens, laundry rooms, etc. In these locations, it is important to use materials that can withstand the wetting associated with a leak in the waterproofing system. Otherwise, it will become necessary to replace the OSB every time a leak is detected, in addition to repairing the waterproofing system. The initial cost of the structure may be less with OSB than with the proper materials, but the cost of repairs is so high as to make this an unacceptable method of construction.

I suggest you talk with a knowledgeable attorney in this matter, because I believe that the use of OSB in locations where it is inappropriate can leave the contractor, designer, and material manufacturer open to liability.

Richard E. Norris
Albany, Calif.

Fire Sprinklers Worth Their Cost

To the Editor:

Your article regarding the National Association of Home Builders' (NAHB) reluctance to support residential fire sprinklers in single-family dwellings was disappointing (Eight-Penny News, "Sprinkler Issue Smolders," 5/90). The NAHB's approach to improved fire safety through support of cost-effective fire safety construction is antiquated. Wake up folks. It's not the structure that's the fire problem, it's the combustibility of the contents. People die from fires in concrete structures too.

The concept that fires start only in older homes from careless smoking is an oversimplification of the fire problem in the United States. Fires make no distinction between new and old structures. Even if the concept were accurate, structures built today will become older homes eventually. The question is: Why build obsolete structures when the technology is available to ensure people can reside in a fire-safe environment for the life of their home?

Our community has had a residential fire sprinkler ordinance in effect since March 1988, and over 200 systems have been installed in single-fam-

ily dwellings with no great financial burden experienced by owners or builders. In fact, per square foot costs have been running in the \$.95 to \$1.25 range, which is very reasonable compared to nearly everything else one builds into a residence these days.

Residential fire sprinkler systems are here to stay, and NAHB should make a conscious decision to support the concept of automated fire protection systems as a means of achieving improved life safety and fire-safe housing.

George A. Lopes
Fire Marshall
Santa Cruz, Calif.

Wind Design Kudos

To the Editor:

I am writing to commend you on your recent article in the April 1990 issue on "Preventing Wind Failures." As a Code Official who reviews wood frame construction, I rarely see enough architectural detail to address this problem during the construction process or after the home is completed. Architects typically seem to analyze vertical loads but pay little attention to lateral forces generated by wind or earthquake.

The recent Loma Prieta Earthquake demonstrated that single-family homes built with plywood shear walls were able to resist the seismic forces, while many homes without these lateral force-resisting components were shaken from their foundations. The simple details you have presented, such as Hurricane clips and shear walls, can make a house structurally sound for both vertical and horizontal loads.

Thomas Heinze, P.E.
Dept. of Public Works
St. Louis County
Clayton, Mo.

Wrong Way to Reassure Clients

To the Editor:

I had a mixed reaction to the letter in the column by Steve Jeffries to his remodeling clients (Business Forum, "Taking the Sting out of Remodeling," 5/90).

The importance of constant communication with the hand-wringing client about facing both realities and needless worries is great advice. However, in my view, the clients feel respected when they know they are listened to and responded to in a singular way. The letter, as I read it, has a number of problems:

It's condescending. It says to the client, "We've heard it all before, and here are the answers, already made out for your convenience, so go to your room and be quiet."

It tries to be cute and friendly. A letter about the hardships of remodeling from the client's view is better when serious. The cuteness (I didn't find it

humorous) only puts the writer's sincerity in question. A letter isn't friendly just because one says so in the first line; doing so only raises suspicion.

Having the letter done by computer so the client's name can be inserted to make it "personal" is a contradiction.

The letter gives a mixed message. It encourages communication but says the contractor establishes the guidelines. The letter offers good work but at the same time asserts the control of the builder, so it cannot enhance a client's feelings of security. I've often been tempted to issue such a letter for my business as a shortcut in the relationship but I knew that as a client I'd feel manipulated.

The quote from Mick Jagger emphasizes the limits of a relationship. The unplugging of the phone at 9 p.m. reads as an attitude problem.

Both the letter and the article are very much promotional devices for the business. The letter is full of self-serving plugs. It says, more or less, we'll listen to you, Mr. Client, because your referrals are essential to us. In my work the attitude is the reverse: I treat clients with compassion and concern out of understanding. If they recommend me, great! Referrals are not a condition.

If our attention is to provide a degree of comfort and security for the client, then the only real source is the certainty that the builder is not insulating himself from the client's concerns. The letter, then, goes in the wrong direction.

Mario Elyjiw
New York, N.Y.

Hardboard's Performance Excellent

To the Editor:

In his recent article "A Hard Look at Hardboard Siding," David Dobbs has provided a broad overview on the use of hardboard siding; however, there are several points which we in the hardboard industry feel should be clarified for your readers.

First, it is interesting that in an article about hardboard, the only addresses given are for materials other than hardboard. For your readers' information, the address and phone number of the American Hardboard Association is 520 North Hicks Road, Palatine, IL 60067; 708/934-8800. Our staff is always available to provide information on application, maintenance, and sources of supply. We will also be happy to comment on those areas where we have points of difference with Mr. Dobbs.

Second, we question the statement [made by a Minneapolis siding distributor] that "all hardboard manufacturers are difficult to deal with." That is hardly the case, in fact the industry has been more than generous in settling reasonable claims. It is necessary to deny claims that are not the responsibility of the producers. And,

in so doing, it is possible the industry may have influenced some users to switch their allegiance to other siding products.

Finally, our industry has had an excellent history of product performance. Hardboard has been used on over 12 million homes. Fewer than one percent of these homes have reported any problems, and of these, most were application or maintenance related.

To avoid these situations, the industry has invested significant time and money in developing and distributing complete application and maintenance instructions with every product shipment.

In closing, with the exception of the few points made above, we feel this article has helped raise the level of knowledge about hardboard for your readers. For this we thank David Dobbs and *The Journal of Light Construction*. We will be happy to participate in any future articles concerning our products.

Louis E. Wagner
Director of Technical Services
American Hardboard Association
Palatine, Ill.

Note: Reader Survey

Whether you use computers or not, please fill out and return the brief Computer Survey, which you'll find on a postcard between pages 12 and 13 in this issue. The postage is paid by us. The information will help us do a better job of providing the computer information you need in your work. Thanks for your cooperation. —The Editors

Clarification

In the May 1990 feature, "Sealing and Painting Treated Wood," we listed the owner of Woodlife and Woodlife II as Roberts Consolidated Industries. In fact, Woodlife and Woodlife II were purchased by Dap Inc., P.O. Box 277, Dayton, OH 45401; 800/543-3840 (in Ohio: 513/667-4461). Dap Inc. now manufactures, markets, and provides technical support for the Woodlife product line.

The paint-stripping product Peel-Away, is not made by Diedrich Chemicals as stated in John Leeke's article "Stripping Exterior Paint," (*JLC* 6/90). Peel-Away is made by Diamond Chemicals Inc., 1501 Broadway, N.Y., NY 10036; 212/869-6350.

Diedrich Chemicals manufactures a product called 404 Rip-Strip, which works similarly but does not need a paper cover. For more information, contact Diedrich at 7373 So. 6th St., Oak Creek WI 53154; 414/764-0058.

Both products are poultice-like dry stripping systems that attach to paint, which is then pulled or scraped off. ■

Keep 'em coming...We welcome letters, but they must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *JLC*, 1233 Shelburne Road, Suite C1, South Burlington, VT 05403.