

Letters



Hidden Dangers in Debris

To the Editor:

Several years ago, our company in upstate New York purchased the Paslode impulse nail gun. It was quite a tool and everybody was happy [with it], especially nailing rafters. But there is a downside to gas cartridge-fired hand tools. Even though we all have tried to be careful and cautious, mistakes do happen.

As we were building an addition on the shores of the Hudson River, the usual construction debris began to pile up. It was our impression that the excavator or owner would arrange for removal of this debris to the landfill.

An unsuspecting excavator hauled the material to the dump only to find they wanted all the debris separated into metals, wood, asphalt shingles, etc. Everyone knows what a task that would be, so he took the trash back to his own land and began to burn it.

Little did he know that the empty gas cartridges from the Paslode nail gun were lurking in the pile.

The cartridges exploded like rockets, one shooting right into his face and giving him a third-degree burn on his neck. He is very lucky to be alive. We felt bad for not accounting for every cartridge.

The excavator is all right now, and we still talk. But believe me, we account for every cartridge now.

It is up to the builder to account for what goes into the debris pile, and what must be handled as explosive, toxic, or harmful to anyone.

An ounce of prevention is worthy of note by this builder.

Peter Andressen
Andressen Builders Inc.
Malden, N.Y.

Conn. Regulates Radon Work

To the Editor:

I am writing concerning an article, "Radon Update: High New England Levels Confirmed" (JLC, 7/90), that appeared in Eight-Penny News. A bill recently signed into law, effective October 1, 1990, affects radon testers and mitigators in the state of Connecticut.

The law states that unless a company has successfully completed the EPA's Contractor Proficiency Program, and registered with the Connecticut Department of Consumer Protection as a home improvement contractor, they cannot perform radon mitigation work. Similarly, companies that offer radon testing must also successfully complete the EPA's National Radon Measurement Proficiency Program, and attend an EPA-approved training course in order to legally test homes for radon.

These laws will serve to regulate those who perform work in the radon industry, and will insure that consumers

are dealing with a professional. It should serve as a model for other states.

I would like to commend you on your upfront approach to radon. More publications should address radon as much as yours does.

Christopher Meehan
Buzzano Construction
Newtown, Conn.

The Ultimate Driveway

To the Editor:

The article called "Rural Driveways" (JLC, 6/90), has left me wondering whether the practices outlined tend to be regional in nature, or do they simply represent the ultimate in good construction from the point of view of an engineer? I cannot dispute any of the information given, but would simply point out that in all my years of driveway construction and maintenance, I've yet to run across a residential driveway built to such specifications (or a customer who could afford one.)

Occasionally I'll install subsurface drainage in wet sites, though this practice (along with culvert installation) now often requires wetland permits. And geotextiles recently have made a major difference in the way driveways and roads can be built. But generally, for most situations here in the White Mountains, a good base of bank run gravel with a topping of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch or $1\frac{1}{2}$ inch of crushed bank run gravel with enough fines (or binder) to make it stay put is adequate, affordable, and maintainable.

The one factor with regards to unpaved driveways that seemed to be overlooked is the shape of the surface. An unpaved gravel (or dirt, as many folks call it) driveway must have a "crown" in order to keep water from lingering on the surface. The requirement for an adequate crown is approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rise per foot of run from each edge of the driveway to the center to force water to the sides, either to drainage ditches or onto the lawn. The crown must be maintained as it wears down through vehicle travel, and, in our part of the country, through snow-plow damage. It is the lack of a crown (poor surface drainage) that is a major cause of potholes in unpaved roads.

Getting the water off the traveled surface in this manner is far more cost effective, at least in our part of the country, than the extensive procedures outlined in the article. I hope JLC is not beginning to lose the practical flavor it has become known for since I started reading it eight years ago.

Russ Lanoie
Front Runner Corp.
Conway, N.H.

Barry Dempsey Responds:

I agree with Mr. Lanoie that a crown is important to good driveway performance. I do not believe that the procedures out-

lined in "Rural Driveways" are impractical and expensive when quality and long-term performance is desired. Driveway cost includes both initial construction costs and maintenance costs. The maintenance of paved driveways can be a very expensive item for a homeowner. I choose to put more money into the initial construction cost and keep maintenance cost to a minimum. I believe the homeowner will prefer this over the long term.

One should also consider whether the driveway will be improved in stages. A driveway which is to remain as a gravel or crushed stone surface may be constructed to less stringent standards than one which will later get an asphalt concrete, PC concrete, or paver block surface.

More on Driveways

To the Editor:

Barry Dempsey's article on rural driveways is well done. The need for good drainage can't be overemphasized. In the section on concrete paving, however, there are some statements that need clarification.

Dempsey says that for good performance, you need reinforcement in the concrete—wire mesh in the slab itself and #4 reinforcing bar to span sawcut sections. If he's talking about sawcut transverse joints, #4 rebar will keep the joint from opening and defeat the purpose of cutting the joint. The concrete will then crack at a location other than the joint. Smooth steel dowel bars are used for load transfer at transverse joints in highway pavements but wouldn't be needed for driveways. Deformed bars are sometimes used in the longitudinal joint of multiple-lane pavements but again they are seldom needed for driveways.

Some engineers question the need for wire mesh in driveways, parking lots, or other lightly used concrete pavements. Wire mesh doesn't keep concrete pavements from cracking. It simply keeps the cracks from opening too far. But if the joints are spaced closely enough (2 to 3 feet apart for each inch of pavement depth) there shouldn't be any mid-panel cracking. It's usually less expensive to saw or cut joints closer together and to leave out the wire mesh.

Ward R. Malish
Editorial Director
Concrete Construction magazine

Barry Dempsey Responds:

When constructing rural driveways it is important to consider a broad range of loads. Garbage trucks can be a major cause of failure in paved driveways. Poorly constructed subgrades and sub-bases can also cause problems of differential settlement. I agree that one can construct PC concrete driveways without reinforcement. However, my findings have been that those with reinforcement, hinged joints, and load transfer are performing better than those without over the long term.

Random cracking and differential settlement generally distract from the attractiveness of a paved rural driveway. I will continue to recommend reinforcement for quality rural driveways constructed with PC concrete. I feel that the added cost of reinforcement which helps improve performance far outweighs the maintenance and reconstruction costs of a driveway built to lesser standards.

When All Else Fails...

To the Editor:

The article by David Dobbs, "Carpal Tunnel Syndrome" (Eight-Penny News, 7/90), was excellent, but I believe he left out another option for sufferers of the malady.

I was diagnosed as having carpal tunnel syndrome and tried all the treatments recommended in the article: stretching exercises, a splint at night, even cortisone shots. None of these did any good and surgery was recommended as the final solution. However, I had heard that surgery was not always successful and could even cause more problems than it solved.

Then a friend recommended an acupuncturist. I was highly skeptical, but as surgery sounded risky, I had little to lose. I called a number of acupuncturists until I found one who seemed highly qualified. I won't go through all of the acupuncture techniques, but I was amazed. My forearm was extremely sore after the first treatment because the doctor told me she had restored the flow of the nerve impulse, and muscles which had been languishing were now active again.

I had eight treatments over eight weeks for a cost of \$35 per treatment, and she restored my wrist to full function. Today, a year and a half later, my wrist is fine, and I have no problems swinging a hammer. Acupuncture is not a panacea for all ailments, but it certainly cured my problem.

Mike Steelman
Julian, Calif.

No Endless Summer

Due to a mix-up in production, the last issue of JLC (New England and Eastern editions) reads "Volume 8, Number 12, August" on the cover. It should say "Volume 8, Number 12, September". Sorry about the confusion.

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, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.