LETTERS

Trades Need To Work Together

To the Editor:

In response to comments made by clients and co-workers about my article, "Stucco Details" (2/92):

I in no way intended to imply all "concrete guys" are lazy or inept. Many do exquisite work, and where would we be without concrete? Truly *professional* concrete workers place a bond breaker or expansion joint between their work and a stucco sidewall, permitting movement of slabs and patios.

Further, if I had my way, I'd be *with* the block guy at his house "having a beer." And had the blueprints specified a cast concrete cap (correctly sized to protect the anticipated application of stucco on the block chimney surface), I'm sure he would have done it in a proper fashion.

The point is this: We *all* need to look and think *beyond* our immediate tasks and jobs to ensure the work we do is both correct as well as supportive of the *other* trades that follow. Ultimately, it's the homeowners who will benefit from this approach; if they loose faith in the building trades, we'll all be in a jam.

Steve Thomas
Reitter Stucco Inc.
Columbus, Ohio

Problem Not Unique To Vinyl Siding

To the Editor:

Your article, "Techniques That Don't Work" (Building With Style, 1/92), was called to my attention by several members of the Vinyl Siding Institute (VSI).

The article deals with a problem common to all trades — installation. You could just as well be discussing the poor installation of kitchen cabinets, a roof, bathroom fixtures, a stove, a front lawn, or a driveway. No product or job is immune from the hazards of poor installation. It is unfair — and prejudicial — to single out vinyl siding.

The VSI recognizes the problem, and three years ago embarked on a program to develop qualified applicators. In the course of this program, the VSI has distributed almost 2,000 teaching kits to carpentry instructors nationwide. The kit contains a teacher's guide, a video on the application of vinyl siding, and a sample application instruction manual.

Both the manual and the video refer to the proper way to overlap the siding, recommending that the laps be staggered to make them less apparent. As for water skin, there are films available that resist water and allow the wall to breathe. If properly installed, water will not get behind the siding. Even if it should, however, the J-Channels in vinyl siding provide egress for the water. In addition, many improvements have been made in the application of siding around protrusions through the use of mounting blocks. Treating protrusions properly is another sign of a qualified installer.

If your readers would like more information, they may contact the VSI, 355 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017; 212/351-5400.

Juliette Lang Cahn
Vinyl Siding Institute
New York, N.Y.

Workers Comp Rates Unfair

To the Editor:

In an article I read recently it said that, nationwide, workers comp rate hikes will average about 15 percent, and then blamed this on the faltering state economies.

My view: The rate hikes are a result of cost-shifting rather than faltering state economies. I believe that hospitals and doctors are shifting costs to workers compensation.

Remodelers and contractors suffer much from such cost-shifting because they pay far larger sums for workers compensation than other occupations. It can be argued that they are paying more than their fair share, which is, in effect, an extra tax.

My research shows that cost shifting will worsen, that the cost of workers comp will increase at a rate of 15 percent a year, and that insurers will always demand more money. Clearly, America's health care payment system is twisted.

Norin A. Elfton
Elfton Rehab, Remodel
Lakewood, Colo.

Vented Roof Panels A Help

To the Editor:

In the article "Building With Structural Foam Panels" (2/92), you forgot one method of venting roof panels to prevent shortened shingle life. Use a panel that has venting cut into the foam just under the upper layer of OSB. You lose about 1/2 inch of insulation this way, but the time savings over building a cold roof with strapping is considerable. Panels such as this without the bottom layer of OSB are also a great way of insulating and venting a cathedral ceiling in an existing house where you have to create an R-38-plus ceiling with 2x6 or 2x8 rafters. Just make sure you keep two thirds of the R-value in the foam since it acts as a vapor barrier.

J. Alexander Wajsfelner
Creative Building Assoc. Inc.
Brighton, Mass.

Ed Note: *Vented panels of the type described are available from Branch River Foam Plastics (15 Thurber Blvd., Smithfield, RI 02917; 800-336-3626); and Midwest Panel Systems Inc. (P.O. Box 38, Blissfield, MI 49228; 517/486-4844).*

In-Line Exhaust Fans Quiet and Powerful

To the Editor:

I read with great interest the article "Choosing K&B Exhaust Fans" by William Lotz (Kitchen & Bath, 2/92). Mr. Lotz was right on target with many aspects of his article, particularly his explanation of the problems associated with cheap bath exhaust fans installed in many homes, namely noise and insufficient power.

The recommended good quality bath fans listed in his article address the noise issue, but there is serious question as to the ability of these fans to provide sufficient ventilation when installed in a typical home.

He also states that "you can't expect a 100 CFM fan to push air all the way out 30 feet of ductwork." If a bath exhaust system using 10 to 15 feet of 4-inch-round duct is equipped with two backdraft dampers and a roof cap, as recommended in Mr. Lotz' article, this system can easily have as much resistance to airflow as a 30-foot duct run!

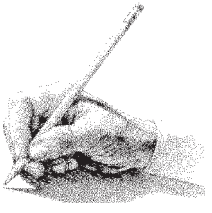
Also, despite the disadvantages of flexible duct presented in this article, it is frequently used in conjunction with residential bath fans. The advantage of flex duct is the ease of installation and lower cost, when compared to a rigid duct system that requires special elbow fittings, hangers, and duct sealants. Builders will continue to use flex duct in great quantities, and a good quality bath fan should be able to move air through this material efficiently.

The most recent development in residential exhaust is an inline centrifugal duct fan that is remotely mounted, high above the bathroom ceiling in the attic or crawlspace to minimize the noise factor. The design of these powerful units is derived from industrial tube fans that must move air through long duct runs under high pressure. The result is a fan that can handle long duct runs, elbows, bends, backdraft dampers, and other resistance-producing devices yet still move enough air to exhaust properly. Fantech has thousands of these fans installed in bath exhaust systems, publishes full performance data at various static pressures for all residential remote mount fans, and offers free assistance in determining static pressures and proper fan sizes to any interested builder.

Pat Talbot
Fantech Inc.
Sarasota, Fla.

Correction

In the article, "Attic Insulation Problems" (Focus On Energy, 3/92), Table 2 should read that Portland, Maine, not Portland, Ore., has 702 hours per year of temperatures below 17°F.



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*, RR2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.