

Live Wire Locator

by Sal Alfano

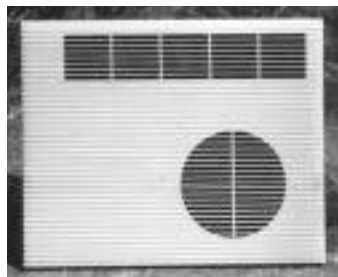


I don't know about you, but I've spent a lot of time standing at the service panel flipping breakers while straining to hear a co-worker in another part of the house shout when I finally cut power to the line we needed to work on. Doing this alone is even harder. I used to plug my drill into a receptacle and leave it running while I went to the panel. When the drill stopped, I knew I had the right breaker. Now all this trial and error is easier with a two-part device called the *Circuit Finder*. A light flashes on the transmitter when it's plugged into a live receptacle. The hand-held, battery-powered receiver picks up a signal from the transmitter and also flashes and beeps until you walk to the panel and trip the proper breaker. The *Circuit Finder* costs \$37.95 and includes a two-blade adapter for 110 volts. A \$23.95 accessory package is available with adapters for both 20-amp and 30-amp 220-volt circuits, as well as a light bulb base and an alligator clip lead adapter. The *Circuit Finder* is manufactured by DBA Controls of Northridge, Calif. To order, contact Burtle Inc., P.O. Box 1544, Burlington, VT 05402; 802/527-0495 (800/660-9270 in Vt.).

Smart Electric Heater

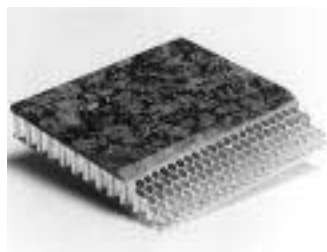
A new electric heating system called *The Advantage* uses a very accurate microprocessor-controlled thermostat to achieve energy savings of between 15 and 20 percent, according to the manufacturer. The built-in thermostat maintains room temperature to within one degree of the set point and can be programmed for dual temperature setbacks. The thermo-

stat also saves energy by controlling the heating element and fan separately and varying energy output to each, like a dimmer switch. Three separate internal temperature sensors turn the element off if the heater gets too hot, and installation is simplified because there is no need to run a separate thermostat



wire. For more information on *The Advantage*, which is backed by a ten-year warranty, contact the Cadet Manufacturing Company, P.O. Box 1675, Vancouver, WA 98668; 800/442-2338.

Lightweight Stone



When the specs call for stone but excessive weight is a problem, a company called *Stonwurks* can save the day. They laminate a 3/16-inch layer of natural stone to a honey-combed aluminum backing for a finished product that weighs as much as 80% less than solid stone. The size of each panel is limited only by the slab of stone it's cut from, and the company commonly provides panels as large as 4x8 with a single, seamless stone surface. The panels can be attached to the substrate with Z-clips, mechanical fasteners, or construction adhesive. *Stonwurks* panels can be used for benches and pedestals, and to face walls and fireplaces. The material is expensive and may not be practical as a flooring material except for small areas or where light weight is required. The base price, depending on the size and type of stone used, is \$35 per square foot before finishing;

custom miters and edge work add to the cost. For more information, contact *Stonwurks*, 314 Lincoln Ave., Clay Center, KS 67432; 913/632-5687.

Operable Round Windows



Round windows add flair to a house design, but since the sash is usually fixed, they don't add any ventilation. French manufacturer *Technique Innovante* recently introduced *Rondo*, a line of windows offering a variety of opening and closing systems, including pivoting, awning, and French styles, in almost any shape. The extruded aluminum frames are sanded and steam cleaned, primed with fade-resistant paint, and finished with two coats of baked-on, polyurethane lacquer. (White is standard, but other colors can be special ordered.) A thermal break helps reduce conductive heat loss through the frame, and neoprene weatherstripping seals the windows against strong wind and driven rain, according to the manufacturer. Standard diameters for operable round windows range from 16 inches to as large as 63 inches. *Rondo* windows are manufactured in Europe, but the U.S. distributor claims delivery time is only three to four weeks. For more information, contact *Architectural Wall Systems*, 11 Col. Daniels Dr., Bedford, NH 03102; 603/472-2986.

Insulated Block Wall



The polyurethane *Ener-G-Block Form* is the same size as a standard masonry unit — 8x8x16 — but weighs less than a pound. The interlocking tongue-and-groove design makes the blocks self-aligning, and allows you to stack

them dry. The construction sequence is simple and involves laying courses of block at the perimeter of the foundation, adding steel reinforcing, and placing concrete (usually by hand) into the column created by the two 5x5 cavities in each block. The result is a series of concrete "studs" — typically 24 inches on-center, with closer spacing at corners and openings — surrounded by foam that provides both thermal and sound insulation. The block walls are reinforced horizontally at regular intervals with a lintel block and steel rebar. The manufacturer claims that building walls with the *Ener-G-Block Form* is 50% faster than conventional methods, and saves on heating and cooling costs when compared to traditional materials. For more information, contact *EnerG Corp.*, 5214 S. 30th St., Phoenix, AZ 85040; 800/775-3674.

In-Line Blower



Some downdraft appliances give you the option of mounting the fan on the outside of the house instead of taking up room in the cabinet. But there often isn't enough clearance between the rim joist and the ground for the blower housing. A new blower system called *Vari Vent* solves the problem because it can be installed in-line anywhere between the appliance and the outdoors. The large diameter, dual-blade, squirrel cage fan is mounted in a sheet-metal housing sized to fit between floor joists that are at least 16 inches on-center. The housing can be screwed directly to the joist through a flange on the bottom, and has a sliding panel for access to the blower. The 6-inch-diameter model produces 460 cfm and costs about \$215. An 8-inch model, which costs \$315, handles 1,000 cfm, but the housing is taller and will hang down below the joists. For more information, contact *Hurst Appliance*, 23210 Greater Mack Ave., St. Clair Shores, MI 48080; 313/778-8670. ■