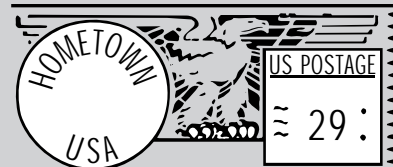


LETTERS



Supreme Court Hurts Small Builders

To the Editor:

In this day and age of trying to get the American economy moving again, the Supreme Court has just shot an arrow at the hearts of enterprising individuals who use their homes to run a business. By not allowing these individuals to deduct the cost of operating an office at home unless they spend the majority of their time there, the Court's decision shakes the resolve and courage of many of these family-run businesses.

The carpenters, painters, electricians, plumbers, and masons that I know all have rooms set aside with at least a desk, telephone, file cabinet, and bookshelf for their businesses. Even though the majority of their time is not spent there, they need this space to figure out how a job will be done, to order materials, to contact employees, to maintain records, and to pay taxes. Without office tools in an office space they would not be in business for long. That, to me, sounds like an "ordinary and necessary expense in carrying out a business" (IRS).

Imants Brolis
Brolis Improvements
Arlington, Va.

Performance of OSB In Hurricane

To the Editor:

I am writing to comment on the article, "Sorting Through Andrew's Mess" (Eight Penny News, 11/92). We take exception to comments contained in the article concerning the performance of nonplywood structural panel products.

I have spent several weeks in Florida as a member of damage assessment teams investigating Hurricane Andrew. I found that oriented-strandboard (OSB) performed identically to the plywood observed.

Some of the early reports of Hurricane Andrew damage grouped nonplywood panel products into one category called, among other things, "pressed-board sheathing," "flakeboard," "particleboard," etc. In fact, nonplywood wood panels fall into two distinct groups depending on the type of adhesive used in their manufacture.

[APA-rated] structural panels use a fully waterproof adhesive. As a group, such panels, including OSB and plywood, are known as "wood structural panels." These panels are designed for structural uses in applications where long construction delays may be expected, or where high moisture may be encountered in service.

Every panel so manufactured has the notation "Exposure 1" or "Exterior" printed in the grade stamp on the panel — the same exposure classification found on the plywood panels commonly called CDX. Consequently, the consumer/contractor can expect equivalent performance [from any APA-rated "wood structural panel"] regardless of panel type.

Since the publishing of the Wind Engineering Research Council's findings, several members of the damage assessment team involved have been contacted [by APA]. When made aware of the difference between structural and nonstructural panels, they agreed that they had lumped the nonstructural panels bonded with interior glue in with the wood structural panels in their initial analysis. The OSB observed had actually behaved in a manner equivalent to that of plywood in similar applications.

Edward L. Keith, P.E.
American Plywood Association
Tacoma, Wash.

At the time our November news story was written, the Miami Board of Rules had banned the use of "pressed board roof sheathing," as we reported. At that time, opinions were divided regarding OSB's performance as roof sheathing. Some felt OSB had performed well, some suspected OSB had failed, and others seemed to lump it in with nonstructural or interior paneling products such as particleboard.

As of this writing — in late February — opinions are less divided. Ron Cook, an assistant professor of civil engineering at the University of Florida in Gainesville, heads the damage assessment team commissioned by the state of Florida to inspect hurricane damage and come up with a set of code recommendations to make construction more hurricane-resistant. In a recent phone call, he told us that of the more than 30 people involved in damage assessment, "nobody has found any difference in the performance of OSB and plywood. The OSB decision was the

one big mistake I think [the Board] made on this." According to Cook, the damage assessment team is not recommending a ban on OSB as a roof sheathing material.

— The Editors

Contractor Deposits Limited by Law

To the Editor:

As a construction management professional, I found David Dobbs' article on payment schedules (1/93) to be quite informative and helpful.

Your readers should be aware, however, that in many states the amount of deposit that contractors can demand in residential work is limited by law. In California, for example, a home improvement contractor is limited to a down payment of 10% of the total contract price or \$1,000, whichever is less.

Sidney J. Hymes
Fairfax, Calif.

Foundation of Mutual Respect

To the Editor:

After reading the responses to Dennis Findley's letter (10/92) and seeing none from another architect, I decided to send in my two cents worth.

I was embarrassed that someone who works in this field can find no good things to say about the contractors he has worked with. It is such animosity that fuels the fire between these two professions. I'm sure that if Mr. Findley were to approach his problems differently, he would find that his chances of a successful project would greatly improve.

Architecture and construction are not perfect arts. To arrive at a solution agreeable to all parties, there has to be a team effort and mutual respect. I find that beginning a project with this outlook establishes a good foundation for communication. We like to find potential problems before they become major, and we have a better chance of that if the contractor is not afraid to pick up the telephone.

We find quality contractors through word of mouth and networking. We are careful in reviewing qualifications and refer-

ences. We do not always recommend that the client take the lowest bid if we feel that the quality we are looking for will be compromised. We look at overall ability, personal congeniality, and an attitude to work through "whatever comes up."

Above all, we look for contractors who love the craftsmanship of building. As architects, we rely on their ability to make our projects the best they can possibly be. We look forward to more successful ventures.

Nan Binkley, AIA
Binkley Ford Associates
Wellesley Hills, Mass.

Steep Stair Blues

To the Editor:

I am greatly bothered by what is probably a successful lobbying effort by NAHB aimed at BOCA, concerning a much needed, but forlorn, "7-11" stair rule adoption.

Meanwhile, I, like many others, will continue an arduous and tortuous trek on stairs best suited for mountain goats. All of which reflects the BOCA directors' apparent estrangement with ergonomic design, and ignorance of statistical reports on aging and accidental falls.

Ironically (and tragically), much of my business activity is spent designing and implementing corrective measures for architectural barriers, such as dysfunctional exterior and interior elevation changes.

It never ceases to amaze me how those who are empowered to provide us with symbolic security (building codes), are so easily misled by one particular symbol (\$\$\$). And so it goes.

Marcus S. Barnes
Adaptive Design & Construction
College Park, Md.



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.