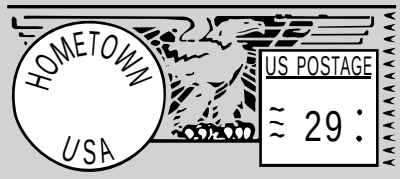
LETTERS



Lead Hazards Real

To the Editor:

Thanks for the update on what OSHA is planning for regulating lead safety issues (*Eight Penny News*, "OSHA May Regulate Work-Site Lead Exposure," 2/93). I've worked on historic structures for 30 years, always with considerable concern about lead paint and lead poisoning, and would like to add the following comments:

(1) Lead poisoning is cumulative, and affects the intelligence of adults as well as that of children.

(2) Lead paint is not only a problem when it is attached to the house, it can also be a serious health risk in the soils around houses. I have estimated that some large 19th-century houses that have been painted on a regular basis often have in excess of a ton of lead in the soils directly adjacent to the house. Not a good place to grow tomatoes or kick up dust.

(3) Many windows were puttied with putties that contained lead; thus, reglazing windows in old buildings should be approached with care.

(4) I take strong exception to the statement in your article that "kitchens and baths are most dangerous since these rooms typically have high gloss paint, which is more likely to contain high lead concentrations than flat or semi-gloss paints." Nothing could be more misleading. A study of 19th- and early 20th-century painters' receipt books finds lead as a primary ingredient in a host of paints. My experience with a variety of 17th- though 20th-century structures bears this out, with lead found in every room of a house. A prudent rule of thumb to use in any pre-1970 house is to assume that lead is present in gloss and nongloss paints alike.

Sanding a test area on a painted surface to reveal all the layers of paint present and then applying an 8% solution of sodium sulfide will quickly turn lead layers black. This is not 100% foolproof, as one may not expose every layer well enough, and a black or dark paint may not show the chemical change as clearly as a white or light color will.

(5) In any event, it's stupid to inhale or ingest paint dust and fumes, be they lead or not. Thus, prudence would dictate the use of a HEPA filtered dust mask whenever work requires disturbing paint films or lead-laden soils. Equal care must be taken to contain and clean up the paint dust, again with a HEPA filtered vacuum cleaner. Unlike asbestos, which may cause cancer over time, lead poisoning can make you very sick in the very real present. The short-term symptoms may go away but the long-term effects will stay with you the rest of your life.

Richard O. Byrne
Middlebrook, Va.

OSB vs. Plywood

To the Editor:

"Shear Wall Basics" (1/93) really hits the mark. There is one paragraph, however, with which we take exception. That section, located at the bottom of the first column of the article, indicates that oriented-strandboard (OSB) sheathing has less strength in shear walls than plywood has. Shear wall values published in APA literature and in code documents, such as CABO's National Evaluation Service Committee Report NER-108, have always been equal for OSB and plywood. This is because plywood was originally used to provide the baseline of performance against which other wood-based structural panels such as OSB are tested and qualified for sheathing uses. Your readers who construct shear walls should therefore choose OSB or plywood without concern about differences in allowable shear values.

William A. Baker, P.E.
Technical Services Division
American Plywood Association
Tacoma, Wash.

Outlet Tips

To the Editor:

The letter from Terry Holcomb in February *Letters* recommended that kitchen convenience outlets be grouped in pairs, each device of the pair to be wired on a separate circuit. I did something like this in a recent kitchen project but limited my layout to different circuits for each side of the room.

Something else I did that has worked out very well was to raise the level of the kitchen wall outlets as high as possible, leaving just enough space to allow fitting of the device plate at the bottom of the wall cabinet. This gives easy access to the outlet when countertops are busy with mixers, bowls, canisters, and decorative items. It also helps to reduce the visibility of cords for small appliances like can openers and radios that are mounted under the wall cabinets.

D. C. Lucas
Hendersonville, N.C.

BIBS Prevents Leaks

To the Editor:

I read with great interest your article "New, Improved Recessed Lights" (*Focus on Energy*, 9/92). Your explanation will help numerous builders who have struggled for years to overcome this problem. I would like to point out another alternative that builders can employ in this situation: the blown-in-blanket system.

The BIB system impregnates loose fill insulation, whether fiberglass, cellulose, or rock wool, with an adhesive both before and during the spraying process. This allows for a custom fit insulation job, and alleviates the problems of air leakage and moisture, as described in the article.

Mark Kuta, Jr.
Ark Seal International
Denver, Colo.

Suggestions Needed For Accessible Shop

To the Editor:

As a subscriber to *The Journal*, I find numerous articles that help with the unique problems facing those in the construction industry. I am writing now in hopes that other readers might help with a challenge that is not uncommon in our industry — a worker who has had an accident and is now in a position where he cannot physically be on the job doing what he is "experienced" at doing.

During the summer of 1991, Jimmie Mortensen volunteered to help a friend inspect some work on the second story of a house. The scaffolding gave way and Jimmie has been in a wheelchair ever since. His recovery is well beyond the expectations of the doctor, and his positive attitude has won him the admiration of everyone around him. Still, it appears that he will continue to be unable to walk (without the aid of a walker) for some time — possibly forever.

Jimmie is presently using his talent as a carpenter in planning and supervising the construction of single-family homes in this area. However, his desire is to build a workshop that is designed for a carpenter who is physically challenged, as he is.

Your publication reaches some who may have experienced this same problem, and who might have come up with good ideas for creating a workshop designed for someone in a wheelchair. I would greatly appreciate any ideas, suggestions, and design sketches that your readers might send me. Or, someone might provide the name of an acquaintance who has built such a shop. Also, for manufacturers who read your magazine, please send information on tools and equipment that have been adapted for use by a physically handicapped person.

Thanks for any help your readers can provide.

Daniel J. Hennessy
P.O. Box 232
Sturbridge, MA 01566

Wanted: PT Lumber Info

To the Editor:

Your readers may be aware of the controversy surrounding the use of pressure-treated lumber (primarily lumber treated with chromated copper arsenate, or CCA). Hazards to those cutting the wood have been suggested and environmental concerns have been raised. We are a group of carpenters and others investigating the situation. We hope to answer some of these lingering questions. We need to hear from people who work with pressure-treated lumber or have some knowledge of its properties. Any stories, experiences, journal references, etc., that your readers may have would be helpful.

Please send information to: Citizens Concerned With Pressure-Treated Lumber, P.O. Box 504, Cambridge, MA 02140.

Lewis Weitzman
Cambridge, Mass.

Correction

In *Focus on Energy* (3/93), we gave the wrong address for Energy Federation. The correct address is 14 Tech Circle, Natick, MA 01760; 508/653-4299.

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.