

Engineered Hybrid

by Charles Wardell



A lot of builders prefer floor trusses to wood I-joists because their open webs make it easy to run utilities. But a drawback to floor trusses is that you can't cut them. Although I-joists can be ordered long, then trimmed to fit the actual site conditions, if you've ordered 24-foot trusses and your foundation sub pours his walls 24 feet, 3 inches apart (it has happened), you have a problem.

TrimJoist solves the problem by placing a 1-foot-long, trimmable OSB web at either end of a parallel-web floor truss that comes in 12-, 14-, 16-, and 18-inch depths and in lengths from 4 feet to 30 feet, in 2-foot increments. The manufacturer says that costs are comparable to standard trusses, and that the product has been approved by all the major code authorities.

Contact: Rebel Building Components, P.O. Drawer 2286, Columbus, MS 39704; 601/327-7950.

New Deck Clip

Given the high price of clear decking these days, you'll earn points with clients if you can install the stuff as you would a hardwood floor, with a surface that's free of nail and screw holes. The *Deckmaster* fastener lets you do just that. The 22-inch-long bracket lets you fasten deckboards from below, without the need for surface screws or nails. The brackets are nailed to the sides of the joists and



the screws driven at an angle, two screws per board. Deckmaster fasteners come in galvanized and stainless steel.

Contact: Deckmaster, 4974 Coronado Ave., San Diego, CA 92107; 800/869-1375.

Skin Protectant



According to the Bureau of U.S. Statistics, skin problems accounted for $1/2$ to $2/3$ of all compensation claims for occupational diseases in 1992. Builders are subjected to more than their share of skin irritants, including solvents like paint thinners and lacquers, as well as grease, cement, glues, acrylics, and formaldehyde. The manufacturer of *Derma Plus* says that it will protect your skin against all of these, and more (it even repels poison ivy). In fact, *Derma Plus* is reported to repel acids and bases over the entire pH range, from 0-14. (The company's marketing video shows an engineer pouring some hydrochloric acid on his hand, then blithely going about his business). It also contains

vitamin E, lanolin, and aloe vera to soothe the epidermis.

Derma Plus disappears by sublimation as the dead cells to which it is attached slough off (an ongoing bodily process). That means it needs to be reapplied every 3 or 4 hours for maximum protection. Costs run between 4¢ and 15¢ per application, depending on how large a can you buy. A six-ounce can, good for 225 applications, costs \$19.50.

Contact: Benchmark Enterprises, 1905 S. Redwood Rd., Salt Lake City, UT 84104; 800/765-4852 (reference #23507).

Strobe Alarm



The 85-decibel scream given off by the typical residential smoke alarm is piercing enough to wake most people. But if you're deaf, even that's not loud enough. The VA-2000 smoke alarm is the first UL-listed smoke alarm for the hearing impaired. When the alarm is triggered, a high-intensity 180-candela strobe light flashes 65 to 75 times per minute — enough to wake even the deepest sleeper. In fact, the VA-2000 exceeds the requirements of the 1990 Americans With Disabilities Act. Suggested retail price is \$225.

Contact: Frynetics Inc., 1055 Stevenson Ct., Suite 102-W, Roselle, IL 60172; 800/654-7665.

Not Like Oil and Water



Many painters still prefer oil-base paint because it brushes on easier, dries harder, and penetrates the wood better than acrylic latex paint. *H₂Oil-Base* is a true oil-base paint that combines the most popular qualities of latex and oil. It brushes on like other oil-base paints but it's formulated with an alkyd that breaks down when exposed to dishwashing detergent. That means you can clean your brushes with soap and water.

H₂Oil-Base is a tintable, full-surface primer-sealer that also acts as a stain blocker and bond coat. The manufacturer claims that it can be used for interiors or exteriors, and that it will stick to porous and gloss surfaces (including concrete block, hardboard, and ceramic tile) without sanding or deglossing. *H₂Oil-Base* dries in two hours, and will support all oil and latex topcoats. For painters who worry that such a quick drying will keep the paint from penetrating the wood, the manufacturer has studies showing that all penetration happens in the first 20 to 30 minutes of drying time. Any remaining drying time is devoted to surface curing.

The product meets all current air quality standards for volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. In fact, its VOC content of 344 grams per liter is well below the standards of state and regional pollution control agencies, including the California Air Pollution Control Districts.

Contact: Wm. Zinsser & Co. Inc., 39 Belmont Dr., Somerset, NJ 08875; 908/469-8100.

Knee-Patch Pants



Tired of working your pants off? *Construction Jeans* are made from 15-ounce prewashed denim stitched together with nylon thread. The buttocks and knees are reinforced with leather panels for longer wear. For extra protection and comfort, a washable foam pad is sewn into the knee between the leather and the denim. The jeans also come with a hammer holder. Costs average between \$42 and \$48.

Contact: Jaque DuBois Inc., 60 Peters Ln., West Warwick, RI 02893; 800/435-3267.

Bendy Drywall



A new gypsum drywall panel will wrap around radius interior walls, letting you

finish stairways, arches, and columns without resorting to lath and plaster. *Gold Bond High-Flex Gypsum Board* is a 1/4-inch-thick drywall board that's designed to conform to all but the tightest curves without the wetting or scoring needed for nonflexible board. High-Flex Board is installed with ordinary drywall screws and can be used for inside or outside radii.

Contact: National Gypsum Company, Gypsum Wallboard Dept., P.O. Box 667850, Charlotte, NC 28266; 800/628-4662.

Retrofit Recessed Fluorescents



The people who make *Retrofit Downlights* say theirs is the first incandescent-to-compact-fluorescent retrofit kit for recessed lights. The kit's reflector and wiring harness combination makes it possible to install them through an existing downlight's mounting frame, "J-box," and mounting hardware. A reflector cone and ballast go into the opening and are held in place with a custom-designed clip system. The ballast is permanently installed and won't need replacement when the lamp burns out. Retrofit downlights are available in various wattages and beam spread configurations, with 6-, 7-, and 8-inch-diameter reflectors.

Contact: Delray Lighting Inc., 11916 Valerio St., North Hollywood, CA 91605; 818/982-3701. ■