LETTERS

Vultures and Hyenas

To the Editor:

I read with some sense of foreboding the letter from Edward K. Williams in your February '95 issue ("Inspectors Protecting Themselves?"). As an architect/contractor/construction manager for over 20 years, I have seen some pretty horrendous construction practices by contractors and developers trying to cut corners and save money. In all of the instances that I witnessed, the perpetrators of the wrongdoing knew that there was a proper, better, conventional way of doing the job but that it would take longer, use more material, and cost more. The hair on the back of my neck rises at the thought of this kind of "professional" being responsible for certifying his own building plans.

With seemingly every possible profession being infiltrated with self-interest and the "consumer be damned" attitude, the last thing the public needs is less control of the vultures and hyenas in the construction industry.

Eugene Artemyeff, R.A.
Glenwood Landing, N.Y.

Bathroom Clearances

To the Editor:

The article "The Safe Bathroom" (1/95) by Iris Harrell was very good. I too am very critical of proper space allowance around fixtures and thought this article made many good points.

One exception, though, was the minimum space of 2 inches or a recommended space of 6 inches from the edge of the lavatory bowl to an adjacent wall. I am a rather large person — 6 feet 4 inches and over 200 pounds. Whenever I use sinks that are too close to the wall, I constantly bump my elbow when doing the daily shaving and teeth brushing routines.

My minimum is 9 inches and I recommend 11 to 12 inches. I believe if you tried even the 6-inch recommendation, you would agree it is too close.

Gary E. Lozowski
Huntersville, N.C.

Wet Spray vs. Batts

To the Editor:

I want to respond to points made in the article "Wet-Spray Cellulose Insulation" (8/94).

First, the R-value comparison between fiberglass and cellulose: The fiberglass industry *does* produce an R-21 batt for 2x6 sidewalls (and an R-15 batt for 2x4). Also, most contractors who use the Blow-In-Blanket System (BIBS) by Ark Seal use fiberglass rather than cellulose. So the debate is not cellulose versus fiberglass but wet spray versus batts.

As to sound control, tests performed for CertainTeed by Riverbank Acoustical Laboratories, in Lake Geneva, Ill., showed that there is little, if any, difference between fiberglass and cellulose.

Bottom line is that both products can perform well in a wet-spray system if properly applied. And that this system does cost more than standard batts. So each builder should decide if it is worth the increased cost, which is small relative to the cost of the total home.

Thomas A. Newton
Manager, Marketing Communications
CertainTeed Corp.
Valley Forge, Pa.

Installing Sink Strainers

To the Editor:

As an architect and code official, I was happy to read Rex Cauldwell's article "The Dirty Dozen" (10/94). The recommendation to use Dow Corning 100% clear silicone sealant instead of plumbers putty when installing strainers seems like a good idea. But I have one question: When you use plumbers putty, there is some resistance built into the putty that allows you to tighten up the retaining ring below the sink. But how do you do this with silicone sealant without squeezing it all out?

Larry Kula
Downers Grove, Ill.

Rex Cauldwell responds:

There is no problem with squeezing out all the silicone sealant. I apply several large beads of sealant on the strainer and several more around the hole in the sink, then insert the strainer. Excess silicone squeezes out the top and bottom. I then put on the rubber gasket from below, holding it in place with the silicone that squeezed out underneath. Next comes the cardboard spacer and the nut. The cardboard spacer is there to prevent the nut from catching the rubber gasket and turning it as the nut is turned. I tighten the nut until the metal of the strainer lip meets the metal of the sink. Most of the sealant squeezes out, but a thin film will remain to seal the joint.

Once the sealant dries, the strainer is in effect glued to the sink and will be leak-free even if the nut works loose. For the silicone to adhere properly, the strainer and sink must be totally dry and oil-free. I use plumbers cloth to clean and rough up the sink and strainer lip before I apply the silicone.

I always clean up excess sealant immediately and apply it to the next strainer. I leave the excess sealant underneath undisturbed. I have never had a leak using this method.

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.