LETTERS

Nailing Deck Ledgers

To the Editor:

I read with interest the article "Deck Support: Making the Crucial Connections" by Christopher DeBlois (*Practical Engineering,* 3/96). Mr. DeBlois highlights the main loads that act on a deck, that is, the weight of the deck and the live loads that act vertically to load the deck/house connection in "single shear." Another important consideration in the design of a deck is the tendency for the deck to pull horizontally (laterally) away from the house. In the deck collapses I have researched, the deck/house connection failed due to inadequate single-shear fastener resistance, coupled with or followed by withdrawal of the fasteners.

As Mr. DeBlois points out, bolts are the best choice for attaching a deck to a house. What about nails? As was shown in your article, nails can resist the vertical loads just as well as bolts or lag screws, but what about their withdrawal resistance? According to the *National Design Specification for Wood Construction,* the calculated allowable withdrawal resistance of common nails can be very low, especially if the deck is exposed to cyclic moisture conditions (as most decks are).

For these reasons, I would not recommend that nails be used to attach a deck that is more than a few feet off the ground.

Bob Falk, Ph.D, P.E.
U.S.D.A. Forest Products Laboratory
Madison, Wis.

Bob Falk is a co-author of Wood Decks: Materials, Construction, and Finishing *(Forest Products Society, Madison, Wis.).*

Value of a Life

To the Editor:

I read with interest your article "California Builders Fight Sprinkler Regs" (*Eight-Penny News,* 6/96). As a builder of custom homes, I have found the cost of a home sprinkler system rather inexpensive, since it is installed at the same time the other plumbing rough-in is completed. In fact, with proper planning, some of the lines to the heads can be incorporated into the lines feeding other parts of the house.

I know that one tends to resist any outside pressure to increase the cost of building a home, especially when in our area the cost of permits and fees is running from $22,000 to $25,000 per unit. But in this case, we need to weigh the cost against the value of a life saved.

Donald D. Confer
Petaluma, Calif.

More Fish Stories

To the Editor:

Having just finished the article "Rewiring Old Houses" (4/96), I'd like to commend Sean Kenney on a well-written and informative piece. After 15 years of electrical work, my all-time favorite trick was the installation of CCTV cable from an ATM in a bank vestibule through the ceiling to the video controls in the rear of the building. The distance was 50 to 60 feet, with standard suspended ceilings in between. There was only about 24 inches of headroom between the roof deck and the ceiling. I took a 1/2-inch hex nut, tied it to a length of nylon mason's line, and fired the nut from a hunting slingshot. Once I got my aim perfected, I was able to use the mason's line as a pull string.

Paul D. Hamilton
Spring Grove, Pa.

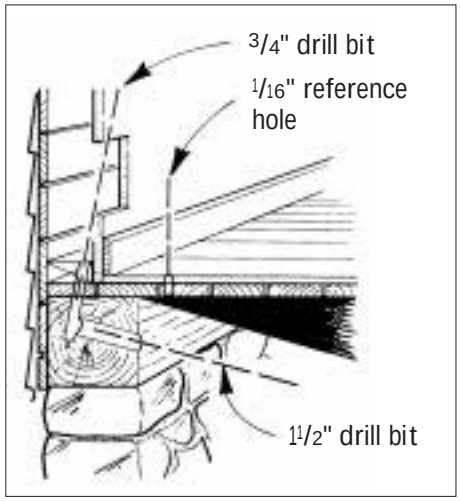
JLC E-Mail Forum

To participate in this free discussion group, send an e-mail message to **JLCforum@bginet.com.** All questions and comments about construction-related topics are rebroadcast daily to the entire group.

To the Editor:

I've had success with accessing an exterior wall receptacle with two intersecting holes through the sill plate: a 3/4-inch hole down via the box hole and a 1 1/2-inch angled hole to meet it (see illustration, below). This takes careful measuring or a 1/16-inch reference hole through the floor and a good eye.

Gil Morrison
Spring Mills, Pa.



To the Editor:

One of the "tools" I use to snake wires through vertical walls is a couple of feet of chain at the end of a length of string. Because the chain is loose and heavy, it quickly falls through the wall cavity. To retrieve it, I probe with an automotive type magnet-on-a-stick. The loose steel chain easily finds the magnet and is promptly pulled out.

Bob W. Anderson
Newport, Minn.

Keep 'em coming! Letters 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; or e-mail to JLC@bginet.com.