LETTERS

Sticking Deadbolts

To the Editor:

I read with interest Byron Papa's article, "Fine-Tuning Entry Door Locksets" (7/96); in particular, his advice to use a brass wood screw to prevent a deadbolt's complete extension as a solution to a sticky bolt. This will defeat the "dead locking" feature of that type of lock and would make jimmying the lock with a pen knife possible. With the bolt fully extended, the bolt is "dogged" in place and would be very difficult to retract without the key.

Steve Timms
Montomery, Alabama

Byron Papa replies:

You are right: If a deadbolt plunger isn't extended all the way out, its locking mechanism won't engage and the bolt can be pushed back in. I used the technique you refer to on a job where I was installing six brand-name entry doors that all had sticking deadbolts. The problem was so bad, it literally hurt my hand to turn the key to disengage some of these locks. It was clearly just a matter of time before a key would break off. The locks had no brand name other than the door manufacture's trademark. I've since learned that they were made by a California company that manufactures locks for door companies. A door company rep told me he's familiar with the problem and that it involves a pressure pin inside the lock mechanism that drops into a slot. He recommended rounding the corners of the slot with a file to remedy the problem. Had I known the locks could be fixed like this, I would have approached my dealer about getting a locksmith to do the work and billing them for the work. At the time, I assumed the dealer would just send me replacement locks with the same problem, so I settled on the relatively simple remedy instead. But in hindsight, I probably should not advise others to do it, and I regret the error. Next time, I'll send the problem back to the dealer.

Shallow Foundation Option

To the Editor:

Regarding "Frost-Protected Shallow Foundations" (9/96), by Bill Eich: I have built four homes at an elevation of 9,000 feet in the Colorado high country, using a 24-inch-deep grade beam 12 inches wide with a slab floor. For my specific situation, the NAHB design guide specified 60 inches of 1½-inch perimeter insulation around the unheated garage area — far too costly and impractical in our rocky soil. Enter an experienced soils engineer who designed the shallow foundation by removing two of the three necessary elements for frost heave (frost-susceptible soil, freezing temperature below the foundation, and moisture). His spec: a 4-foot-wide band of 12-inch-deep screened rock, on which the grade beam is formed. Also, the finished grade slopes away from the structure for 8 feet. The rationale is that the screened rock won't heave if it freezes, as it does not hold moisture. The city building department had no problem with his stamped detail.

Daniel McCrerey
McCrerey Construction, Ltd.
Frisco, Colo.

Dislikes Spray Foam Insulation

To the Editor:

Regarding spray foam insulation ("Getting the Most For Your Insulation Dollar," 10/96): I've seen this system in action and there are a few important disadvantages that were not mentioned.

After this stuff is sprayed into a wall or ceiling cavity, it expands and needs to be sawn flush with the framing. Often, there are wires for lights left sticking out of the bays. What do you think happens to the insulation on romex wire when a handsaw runs across it?

While it may be somewhat difficult to fish a wire down a wall with cellulose or fiberglass, try doing it on one with foam. If your clients want to add an outlet or a switch after they move in, tell them what wire-mold is. Then, in years to come, when these homeowners want to remodel their house, think about how much fun it will be to try and strip this junk out of the wall and ceiling bays.

John Marsoobian, Jr.
Newton, Mass.

Termite Shield Ineffective

To the Editor:

I read your recent article "Frost-Protected Shallow Foundations" (9/96) with interest. It just so happened that the article came out just before a visit from the local termite control expert to my own home, which I built in 1980 on Martha's Vineyard, where I work as a contractor. I used a poured concrete foundation insulated with 2-inch Dow Styrofoam adhered to the outside. I placed a continuous copper termite shield between the foundation and the frame. But the termites persisted and have finally found their way into the framing despite the termite shield. I am now faced with the removal of the Styrofoam from the foundation so that the perimeter can be chemically treated as a termite barrier.

If one depends on this type of insulation as a critical component in a building, such as the foundation insulation, protection against insects must be considered as part of the overall scheme.

David Damroth

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.