



THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

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JLC's

Letters

Ridgehooks & Fall Protection

To the Editor:

Thank you for Jay Klein's informative article "Scaffolding Options" (12/96). Regarding ridgehooks, our reading of OSHA regs is that fall protection is not required when on a secured ladder or an OSHA-compliant platform (with guardrails, toeboards, etc.). This would preclude the need for supplemental fall protection while actually on a ridgehook ladder. Ladders (ridgehook or ground-supported) are intended to provide a safe route for workers to get to and from their work site. Also, ladders are often used in routine repair and maintenance tasks such as chimney cleaning, flashing repair, and so forth — tasks that we understand are not subject to OSHA regulation.

This is the guideline we follow, but an official interpretation from an OSHA agent would be helpful.

Stephen Bushway, Owner
 Deer Hill Enterprises
 Cummington, Mass.

Roy Gurnham, manager of OSHA's Office of Construction Standards and Compliance Assistance, in Washington, D.C., responds:

Employers can use ridgehook-supported ladders to access staging as long as the requirements for access in subpart L [Code of Federal Regulations, Title 29 — Labor, Part 1926] are met. In addition, employers can use ridgehook-supported ladders for routine repairs if they meet the requirements of subpart X or subpart L as appropriate.

With regard to ladders, fall protection ... includes angle of placement, securing, clearance, extension above the landing, support, three-point contact while climbing, and many other considerations that are intended to prevent falls.

Chimney cleaning and flashing repair are covered by OSHA regulations. A ridgehook-supported ladder may be used

to do these activities, and no personal fall arrest system is required when working from the ladder. However, if the employee gets off the ladder, then subpart M and OSHA Standard 3.1 apply.

If you have any further questions, please contact the Office of Construction Standards and Compliance Assistance, Room N3621, 200 Constitution Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20210.

PEX Manufacturers Pipe Up

To the Editor:

It was refreshing to see such a complete article on the PEX options that are available ("Plastic Plumbing Comes of Age," 3/97), and we thank Mr. Thomas for his honest and enlightening commentary. We, like Thomas, believe that PEX is the future of plumbing. There were, however, a few inaccuracies that may cause confusion among PEX users.

Mr. Thomas mentioned that the two types of PEX tubing are "hePEX" and "pePEX." These two names are in fact trademarks of Wirsbo Company, not generic terms for PEX. HePEX tubing is Wirsbo's oxygen barrier tubing used in hydronic radiant-floor heating systems. PePEX is another brand name used by Wirsbo to refer to a type of barrier tubing we no longer manufacture, not "uncoated tubing used for potable water," as described in the article. Wirsbo's nonbarrier tubing used for potable water is referred to under the registered trademark Aquapex.

Cindy Albrecht
 Marketing Coordinator
 Wirsbo Plumbing Division
 Apple Valley, Minn.

To the Editor:

Thorp Thomas's article should help dispel some of the nagging myths about PEX plumbing systems. I dis-

agree, however, with his characterization of Rehau's compression ring fitting system as "overkill for most potable water plumbing systems." Indeed, the demise of polybutylene (PB) can be directly linked to faulty fittings; it is the fittings — not the PB pipe — that are most often the culprit in PB system failures. Rehau developed a permanent, reliable PEX fitting for precisely this reason.

While Rehau's fittings may take slightly longer to install than some others, an experienced contractor can make a joint within 15 seconds. This minimal amount of additional time is well worth not having to revisit a job site to repair a failed system. Also, the joining tool he refers to has been redesigned and now sells for \$130 rather than \$2,000.

Bill Johansen
Marketing Manager, Plumbing Systems
Rehau
Leesburg, Va.

Copper Still Rules

To the Editor:

Necessity is the mother of invention, right? In 1993, I contracted to do a total repipe of a three-bath home complete with two water heaters, a laundry room, and two kitchens. It was to be a nasty crawl job, and I bid high to cover myself with two employees for two to three days of work. By the time the job came around, one employee had quit and the other was nursing a bad back. There I was with a signed contract and only myself to tackle the job.

The night before the job, I found a solution that would allow me to repipe this house in a single day by myself *and* put a profit in my pocket: Copper pipe joined totally with ferruled compression fittings (elbows, tees, male/female adapters, unions, couplings, etc.). After cutting all the pipe and risers and branches, I crawled under the house and started connecting the piping with compression fittings.

Ten hours later I was completely done: all new supplies to the tubs/showers, basins, water heaters, and toilets, the lines connected, and the water back on, without any soldering!

I've done every single repipe in this manner ever since and without help. I will go head-to-head with a PEX plumber any day of the week and make more money per job than he can *and* be done before him! And without the fancy, expensive tools required with PEX!

Jeffrey Van Middlebrook
PHD Services
Pacific Grove, Calif.

Moment Frame Connections

Your article "Installing a Steel Moment Frame" (*Practical Engineering*, 3/97) was great. While I understand why you would put steel in the house, I don't understand why you would anchor it with only four 1/2-inch lag screws per base "per the engineer's specs." The article says that in some cases, the baseplates were screwed to the tops of the pilings. How much uplift resistance does lagging into the end grain of a pile provide? I am no engineer, but the building inspectors around here would not go for that.

Donald Stephens
Hilton Head Island, S.C.

Patricia Hamilton responds:

The moment frame extended the full 54-foot width of the house, and was therefore very long relative to its height. This reduces the magnitude of overturning forces, and therefore the wind uplift forces are largely counteracted by the weight of the house. In the absence of uplift, lag bolts were adequate to transfer shear forces into the pile caps. Your point about end grain is a good one: Where the columns rested directly on a piling, we used straps in addition to lag bolts.

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 76176.2053@compuserve.com.

