Products

by David Frane

Quick, Strong Safety Rails

Properly built safety rails cost more than many estimate line items, but builders rarely think about them till there's an injury or a fine. On your next estimate, it may be worth including the cost of *Safety Boot*, a patented anchoring system that lets you install OSHA-compliant rails in less time than it takes to build noncompliant makeshift rails. The floor-mounted plastic brackets hold doubled-up 2x4 posts and removable 2-by toeboards. Rails fasten to the posts instead of studs, so they're out of the rocker's way, and because the rails mount inside the edges of stairs and landings, they don't interfere with finish work. Builders who use the Safety Boot often leave the posts in the bases and haul them from job to job. A single post base costs around $20.

Contact: Safety Maker Inc., P.O. Box 842014, Houston, TX 77284; 800/804 4741.

Hanger Gun

Given a choice, many framers would never drive another nail by hand. Problem is, most nail guns don't work on joist hangers or hurricane ties. *Paslode's Positive Placement System* is the only nail gun made that will fasten metal framing hardware without using a hose or compressor. The IM325PP is based on the gas-powered Impulse framing gun. A special nosepiece lets you hit the hole in the hardware every time. Paslode says it's a real time-saver on hanger-intensive jobs. Nails are ICBO approved and come in a number gauges and sizes. You can also get a conversion kit to allow the gun to shoot regular framing nails. The gun retails for around $700; nails cost from $16 to $30 per thousand.

Contact: ITW Paslode, Vernon Hills, IL 60061; 800/323-1303.

Temporary Kitchen

Fewer people would remodel their kitchens if they knew how disruptive it was going to be. Providing clients with decent temporary cooking facilities is a great way to maintain goodwill. *Teba Mini Kitchens* run on 110 volts and draw less than 15 amps and are equipped with automatic override switches to reduce the chance of blowing breakers. The TFL1 (about $160) has two burners, a conventional oven, and broiler; the TFL5 (about $195) adds convection cooking, a rotisserie, and a timer.

Contact: Aisenstein and Gordon Inc., 80 Twinbridge Dr., Pennsauken, NJ 08110; 609/662-3333.

Electronic Span Calculator

Span charts are about to become obsolete. The culprit is *SpanMaster*, a handheld calculator that makes it easy to design beams, headers, joists, and rafters without flipping through pages of tables. It took me less than five minutes to learn how to use it to calculate spans and size floor joists. You choose joist spacing, live load, dead load, and deflection, and SpanMaster calculates the appropriate joist size using design values for all grades and species of Western lumber. An option key allows the sophisticated user to design for machine-stress-rated lumber or override the default settings. Retail cost is $39.95.

Contact: Western Wood Products Assoc., 522 S.W. Fifth Ave., Suite 400, Portland, OR 97204; 503/224-3930.

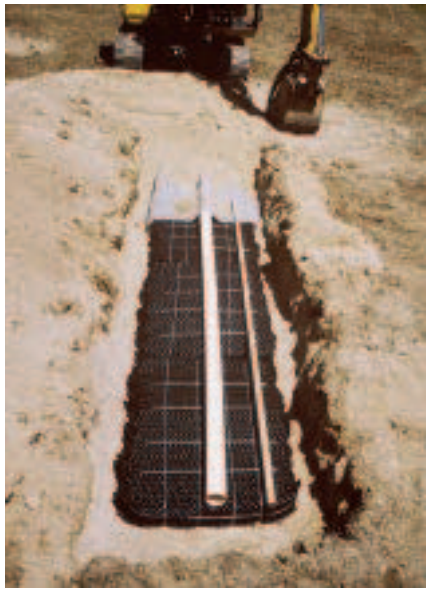
Basement Light and Egress

It's difficult and expensive to provide egress to basement rooms, and natural light and ventilation are also hard to come by. An inexpensive solution to both problems is to install a *Scapewel* window-well system. Coupled with a properly sized window, it provides UBC-compliant egress. Scapewel consists of high-density polyethylene walls filled with rigid foam. Panels inside the well provide terraced planter boxes that double as emergency stairs. Installation is quick and easy: Assemble the unit, bolt it to the foundation, then backfill. Wells extend 49 inches from the foundation and are available for 4-foot- and 5-foot-wide windows. Cost is around $400.

Contact: Scapewel, 145 W. Swallow Rd., Fort Collins, CO 80525; 800/854-9724.

Compact Leach Field

It's hard to fit septic systems on sites that are small, have high water tables, or have low perc rates. The *In-Drain Leaching System* is a cost-effective way to put leach fields on problem sites. Drain units consist of alternating layers of plastic core material and Bio-Matt fabric. Place them on a 6-inch layer of sand, cover with perforated distribution pipe and filter fabric, then bury them. A 12-square-foot unit provides 100 square feet of treatment area. In-Drain takes up less space and is said to maintain greater long-term leaching capacity than standard systems. According to the manufacturer, five drain units per bedroom provides adequate leaching capacity in most soils; this would require 20 feet of trench, or one-third that needed for a comparable aggregate system. Drain units cost $70 to $80 each and are approved for use in several eastern states.



Contact: Eljen Corp., 15 Westwood Rd., Storrs, CT 06268; 800/444-1359. ■