

*If you haven't seen our online forums yet, point your browser to [www.jlconline.com](http://www.jlconline.com) and click on **Forums**. You're welcome to browse — or, better yet, join in the conversation yourself. Here are excerpts from recent message threads.*

— *The Editors*

## TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

### Power Sander Pros & Cons

• **Posted by Chad:**

*I've got a Porter-Cable drywall sander that leaks black grease at the bottom of the flex shaft. After a short trip to the factory-authorized service center, I was assured this is normal and will stop when the grease level balances out. Well, that's fine and dandy, but it's still slopping grease on my fresh drywall. Has anyone else had this problem? Did you have better results getting the problem repaired? I love the tool and it saves countless hours, but ... black grease dripping off the sanding head? Come on, Porter-Cable, you can do better than that.*

○ **Followup posted by Steve:**

I have one with the same problem. I assumed I would have to buy a new flex shaft for it to quit leaking. I haven't done anything about it, but it bothers me to find out this is a common problem. The company should offer to fix our sanders with a better flex shaft. I have always found P-C to be a reputable company, but this gives me doubts.

○ **Followup posted by Dennis:**

I have one and have used it sparingly. I have had no problems such as you state.

○ **Followup posted by Sam:**

Quite apart from the grease leakage problems, do these things really work?

○ **Followup posted by Steve:**

It does as good a job as you make it do, same as any pole sander, but the dust collection is great. The only thing the sander doesn't do is the last 1/2 inch of an inside corner. If you get one, start out with fine paper and a slow speed until you get the hang of it. In the wrong hands, you can get large circular tracks or divots if you're not careful — the sander does work fast!

*JLC asked Porter-Cable Product Manager Michael Whitman to comment on this problem with the model 7800 drywall sander: "Porter-Cable has received only a few complaints about grease leaking from the flexible shaft housing, but we are taking them seriously. We are currently field testing a possible correction which, if successful, we will implement into our production.*

*I'd also like to comment on Chad's statement that the "authorized service center" advised him that the leakage was "normal." This was not a Porter-Cable service cen-*

*ter, but rather an independent repair shop "authorized" to work on Porter-Cable products for reasons of proximity and convenience. More important, the leakage is not normal and the repair shop should not have said it was. We will have a company representative contact the shop to address this issue.]*

## MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES

### Flashing For Steel Roofing

• **Posted by Parker:**

*We're using agricultural steel (raised rib, not standing seam), and we need to put a chimney penetration through. We're looking for flashing details for either a round or square chimney. We've already thought about solutions that involve massive amounts of caulk, but we're looking for something better!*

○ **Followup posted by Ron:**

We use Dektite flashings, which are made for metal roofing. They make standard flashings for pipe through 24 inches in diameter; if needed, they make flashings for high temp. We buy ours from Dynamic Fastener (800/821-5448) — they normally have anything we order in stock, and they ship promptly.

### Cutting Fiber-Cement Siding

• **Posted by Tom:**

*Who knows of the best blade to use to cut hardboard siding such as Hardiplank? And does the dust from cutting cause a problem for the chop saw?*

○ **Followup posted by Jim:**

Our framers use tools supplied by Hardie — shears that cut it like butter. Check with your supplier.

*[The cutters mentioned are not supplied by Hardie, but are recommended in the company's installation instructions. The tools are part of the Snapper Shear line made by Pacific International Tool and Shear, Ltd. (P.O.Box 1604, Kingston, WA 98346; 800/297-7487; [www.snappershear.com](http://www.snappershear.com)). Several handheld nibbler-type shears are available, including the all-purpose electric Snapper Lite Steelhead (model SS304, \$319), and the pneumatic Windshear (model SS309, \$339), both of which are said to make straight or curved cuts through up to 10,000 feet of fiber-cement siding or backerboard on a single set of blades. Two additional cutters, the Razorbacker and the Whippersnapper, are designed for tight radius cuts and scrollwork. Also available are two bench-mounted models that operate like paper-cutters: the 24-inch Manual Shear (model SS210M, \$573) and the 14-inch Pneumatic Shear (model SS110A, \$998), which includes a three-piece stand and outrigger feed table. — The Editors]*

### Deck Material

• **Posted by Joe:**

*I have recently been asked to install two rooftop decks in NYC for some upscale clients. Because of their aesthetic demands, I am considering using Ipe decking with concealed fasteners. Has anyone used this type of decking and what is your opinion? What kind of concealed fasteners do you like best? The decking has to be panelized to provide access for roof cleaning and repairs. Any ideas? Has anyone ever used 12- or 14-gauge steel framing members for an exterior deck?*

◦ **Followup posted by Mike:**

I can't speak for concealed fasteners or steel framing, but I do have experience with Ipe. Excellent material, not cheap. Can't drive a nail through it, but it cuts like butter, and clean — no tear-out, even with a framing blade. I've only glued and screwed or nailed (stainless steel) after predrilling holes. Seal cut ends, otherwise the stock will split — I can point out every one I missed after only a month to the weather. Hard, durable, and needs little care. None of the Ipe decks I've installed has had any shrinking. I space 1/8 inch between boards and still have 1/8 inch years later.

◦ **Followup posted by Rick:**

I use Ipe, but I don't like concealed fasteners for structural reasons. I predrill and countersink stainless screws. I will plug holes and sand for an extra charge.

## COMPUTER SOLUTIONS

### Alternatives to Win95

• **Posted by Georgia:**

*I just read an article about a new operating system called Linux. Anybody out there using it? How does it work with AutoCAD14? Anything is preferable to Windows 95.*

◦ **Followup posted by Joe Stoddard (forum moderator):**

Linux is a shareware knockoff of Unix. It's developed by its users, not by any particular company. ISPs like it because it's very stable as a Web server platform. In raw form, you get a black screen with white type (like DOS), and although there are graphical interfaces available, they look like — guess what? — Windows.

While Linux shows promise as an operating system, not many applications have been compiled yet to run on it. I don't know of any CAD products that are (except possibly for Arris, which started in Unix). I'm not sure of long-term plans, but right now there is no ACAD R14 port to Linux that I'm aware of. Other apps are just as rare, although Corel has recently released a Linux version of WordPerfect Suite, and there is more stuff coming online all the time.

I wouldn't hold my breath, however. I doubt Linux will ever reach critical mass for desktop computing, because retail software developers are not going to invest in something that offers 1001 "versions" and no factory tech support.

◦ **Followup posted by Robin:**

The best and easiest operating system to run is, of course, the Macintosh. It continues to amaze me that more people don't use one. The up-front cost is greater, but the long-term cost is far less, because of stability and ease of use, which has been proven time and time again by independent firms.

#### **Followup posted by Georgia:**

Sorry, but been there, done that. Yes, very easy to use, and lots of fun, but — and a very big "but" I might add (no pun intended) — my Mac experience was expensive and nothing but frustrating. The problem: Our area pretty much only supports Windows users and I could not convince my associates that the Mac way was better than the old tried-and-true DOS or Windows environment. I also had no service support to speak of. So I sold my Mac for less than a dime on the dollar. I guess the old adage is true: It's what you get used to, not necessarily what's best.

