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BPA INTERNATIONAL

JLC's

Letters

Paint New Siding Quickly

To the Editor:

Bill Feist's article on paint (9/99) understates the effect of sunlight on paint adhesion. His book, *Finishes for Exterior Wood,* helped me determine why the paint was falling off a new house we recently built. The unprimed cedar was in sunlight for a month before we could paint it. His research indicates that cedar loses half its ability to hold paint every two weeks! Other woods don't fare much better. I think his book is a "must read" for builders and painters. Unfortunately in our situation, we had to re-side the entire house to fix the problem.

Tom Payne
Craftsman Homes Group
Portland, Ore.

Ridge Vents vs. Gable Vents

To the Editor:

The response by Henri de Marne to the question about ceiling drips (*On The House*, 9/99) points out two common causes of condensation on metal roofs: night radiation, which cools the roof below the ambient air temperature, and water vapor rising from the heated space below. Good ventilation, which should include a ridge vent and must include soffit vents, will prevent condensation by warming the roof and clearing out the water vapor.

Gable vents are adequate for ventilation on hot days because the air heated by the roof rises through the J-vents or ridge vent and draws in fresh air from the gable vents. However, on cold nights, the air cooled by the roof falls and cannot be exhausted by gable vents. Soffit vents are required to exhaust the falling air and draw in fresh, warmer air from the J-vents or ridge vent.

Leonard Azar
Boise, Idaho

Henri de Marne responds: First, I agree that good ventilation must include soffit and ridge vents, but these are generally not sufficient to handle the convection of warm, moist interior air from the living space. This is why it is important to seal the heated envelope as tightly as possible.

Second, the combination of gable and ridge vents is not effective. Unless driven by the wind, air movement will follow the easiest path. As a result, the end sections of a ridge vent will often be fed air from the gable vents instead of the soffit vents.

Gable vents in combination with soffit vents are also not effective at ventilating the upper center section of a roof, nor are gable vents alone (except perhaps in the presence of very strong wind). I have investigated roofs using these venting methods, and have often found mold growing on the sheathing and rafters in the center section of the roof, from the ridge to about halfway down the rafter length. In attics with only soffit vents, the situation is even worse, with mold growing in the top two-thirds of the roof. The only vented areas are in the vicinity of the soffit vents.

Only the combination of continuous soffit and externally baffled ridge venting will provide a total air wash of the rafters and sheathing at all times. In snow country, ridge vents open up in a relatively short

time, because most snowfalls are porous and do not completely stop ventilation.

As to your last point, on cold nights, the outside air is always cooler than the attic, since even well-insulated attics are warmed by the transfer of heat from the living space. This aids the thermosiphon process, which allows air movement from soffit to ridge vents even on windless days. As the night gets colder, the attic air will also cool down, but not as fast as the outdoor temperature.

Venting Under Metal Roofs

To the Editor:

In his answer to the question about the "raining ceiling" (*On the House*, 9/99), Henri de Marne says that in the 'as built' detail there is no continuous channel from soffits to ridge. Of course there is — the corrugations of the metal roof. Depending on their size and number, and assuming there are no "filler strips," the vertical strapping shown in the proposed solution may not be necessary.

Pat McGuire
via e-mail

Henri de Marne responds: Depending on the profile of the metal roofing, there may be some ventilation, but it isn't as much as you get with 2-by cross-strapping. Moreover, as you point out, filler strips are often used and these would block upward ventilation.

Winter air is heavier than summer air and does not flow as easily (compare it with oil in winter and summer). No corrugations that I am aware of offer the recommended 1 1/2 inches of air space needed to ensure a flow of air in winter to overcome surface friction. But the most compelling reason for using cross-strapping is to allow drainage channels for the condensation that occurs under metal roofs in winter.

In the "as built" detail in the September issue, condensate would be blocked by the horizontal strapping, causing it (and the structural framing below) to be continually wet, leading to eventual rot. Also, the moisture might eventually cause the fasteners to rust enough to lose their grip. I have removed one roof and seen a second one where the metal roofing could be lifted off the strapping by hand because the combination of rusty nails and softening of the wood around them had rendered the fastening useless.

Warranty Woes

To the Editor:

I had to laugh when I read the letter from Marvin Windows in the August issue. In my own home, I have three rotting Marvin windows and a Marvin patio door less than 10 years old. My claim was ignored by Marvin for months at a time, and repeated phone calls only got me voice mail. When the dust had settled, I was offered a discount on new windows to replace the windows I have. What happened to replacing the windows at no cost to me? It seems that they don't do that anymore. Instead, they have offered me about a 10% discount over what I can buy them for at my local yard.

Tony Torra
via e-mail

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