

# Products

by Joe Stoddard

## Ready, Set, Grip!

**D**esigned to eliminate the two-handed fumbling required by other multi-tools, the *SwitchPlier* springs into action at the push of a button. In addition to the pop-out pliers, the compact aluminum case houses five locking stainless-steel components, including a can and bottle opener; small, medium, and large screwdrivers; a half-serated blade; a three-sided file; and a quarter-inch socket drive.

For \$74.95, the *SwitchPlier* has enough tools on board to make it a useful addition to any pants pocket, and enough cool to make *West Side Story's* Riff jealous.

Contact: SOG Specialty Knives, Inc., 6512 212th St. Southwest, Lynnwood, WA 98036; 888/764-2378; [www.sogknives.com](http://www.sogknives.com).

## Decking Stickum

**P**lastic lumber is the hottest thing in decks since the backyard barbecue, but the stuff can expand and contract enough to pop the heads right off the screws or nails holding it down. According to the manufacturer, using *Plastic Lumber & Decking adhesive* helps to distribute the movement and stress between the joists, which means a stronger and more stable deck with virtually no maintenance call-backs — and that means you can spend more time sitting on your own deck. 10.5-ounce tubes cost \$2.97; 29-ouncers are \$4.97.

Contact: MACCO, 925 Euclid Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; 800/634-0015; [www.liquidnails.com](http://www.liquidnails.com).



## Swingin' Curves

**W**ith most decorative windows, you have to choose one: light or ventilation? A new line of operable *CrestCurve* segment-head casement windows fixes that quandary. Available in 43 standard sizes, simulated divided lites and a range of glazing options enhance the versatility of these aluminum-clad wood windows. Prices vary with size.

Contact: Crestline, 888 Southview Dr., Mosinee, WI 54455; 800/552-4111; [www.crestlinewindows.com](http://www.crestlinewindows.com).

## Breaker Breaker

**H**aving the juice come on while you're servicing an AC compressor or changing planer knives can put a real damper on your day. 3M's *PanelSafe System* is what you need to secure breaker boxes on job sites, in multifamily buildings, at your shop — anywhere you don't want a shocking surprise. The system consists of a bar that mounts on

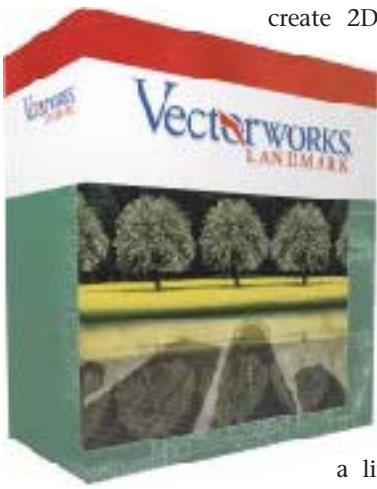


the panel cover between the rows of breakers and rod or hook inserts that stop breakers from being turned on or off when the bar is locked down. When unlocked, everything fits neatly behind the panel door. *PanelSafe* will add around \$100 to a 42-slot panel, less for smaller boxes.

Contact: 3M Electrical Products Division, A130-4N-36, 6801 River Place Blvd., Austin, TX 78726; 800/245-3573; [www.3M.com/elpd](http://www.3M.com/elpd).

## Virtual Sitework

**S**ick of cost overruns for site work? If you had used *Vectorworks LANDMARK 9* to digitally “dig” your last foundation (before the backhoe showed up), you would have known that moving the house up the hill ten feet was going to cost an extra five grand. *LANDMARK* lets you



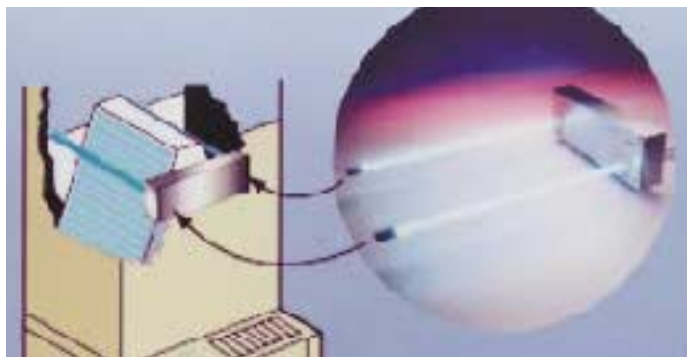
create 2D and 3D drawings of your site, complete with embedded pricing and quantity data. The program tracks any changes you make to the drawing and can spit out new cost and quantity reports whenever you like. Like any CAD program, it won't do it by itself — but with

a little effort *LANDMARK* could help contractors who have to deal with dirt stay out of the hole. Pricing starts around \$1,295.

**Contact:** Nemetschek N.A., 7150 Riverwood Dr., Columbia, MD 21046; 888/646-4223; [www.nemetschek.net/landmark](http://www.nemetschek.net/landmark).

## Mold Busters

**C**entral air conditioning can grow more mold than a pan of baked beans that's still kicking around from your Labor Day picnic. What's worse, all that gunk could be making your customers sick. *Steril-Aire's SteriLight* straddles the A-coil found



in most residential systems and provides a constant source of UV-C light — used for years in medical and industrial air-conditioning systems to control harmful microbes. According to the manufacturer, less mold and mildew growing in the A-coil also means less frequent cleaning and longer life — which offsets the annual cost of replacement bulbs. Wholesale costs start at around \$300 for the dual-bulb model, with other configurations available to fit nearly any system.

**Contact:** Steril-Aire, Inc., 11100 E. Artesia Blvd., Suite D, Cerritos, CA 90703; 562/467-8484; [www.steril-aire-usa.com](http://www.steril-aire-usa.com).

## \$6 Problem Solver

**R**emember that last radiant floor you installed? Remember that we told you not to run heat pipes too close to the toilet? Remember the wax ring that kept melting? Remember that you promised the clients that this winter they'd be able to turn the heat on *and* use their bathroom? Well, your prayers have been answered: Fluidmaster has developed a *Wax-Free Bowl Gasket* system that uses rubber O-rings to make the seal. Available to fit both



3- and 4-inch plastic and cast-iron pipes, the system will seal the WC on uneven floors and even botched tile jobs where the flange is ... somewhere down there. Both the 3- and 4-inch models retail for under six bucks at home centers and supply houses. You can thank me later.

**Contact:** Fluidmaster, Inc., 30800 Rancho Viejo Rd., San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675; 949/728-2000; [www.fluidmaster.com](http://www.fluidmaster.com).

## In the Zone

**A**utomatic zone dampers can transform a roast-then-freeze forced-air heating system into something a lot more comfortable — but what if the house you want to retrofit has ductwork buried under a slab, or in a crawl-space you last fit into when you were 22? Say hello to the



*AZR (Automatic Zone Register)*. Instead of mounting mid-stream in the ductwork like most zone dampers, the AZR slips into an existing register opening, with no modifications to existing ducts. Run a plenum-rated 'stat wire back through the duct to a zone panel or stand-alone thermostat, and you're done. Sizes are currently limited to 10x4, 12x4, 10x6, and 12x6, with prices starting at around \$50.

**Contact:** Jackson Systems, LLC, 100 E. Thompson Rd., Indianapolis, IN 46227; 888/652-9663; [www.jacksonsystems.com](http://www.jacksonsystems.com).

## Panel Saw Hauler

Let's face it — cutting up 4x8 panels on a job site (or in your shop, for that matter) is a real hassle. The first time I used a vertical panel saw I was hooked on how easy and accurate it was but wished there was a way to move the finicky machine from job to job. Saw Trax must have felt my pain, because its new *hitch-mounted panel saw carrier* makes it possible for “any knuckle head” (they said it, not me) to load and



transport a Saw Trax panel saw with no hassle and without knocking the saw out of whack. Downside? The \$249 carrier fits only Saw Trax saws; knuckle head and mini-van not included.

**Contact:** Saw Trax, 3790 Hwy. 92, Suite 220, Acworth, GA 30102; 888/729-8729; [www.sawtrax.com](http://www.sawtrax.com).

## Clean Seat

Cleaning up around the toilet is something your customers will be stuck doing long after you're on to the next job. If you want to score points, install bath products that will make cleaning easy. The Bemis *twist-and-lift 200 (round) and 1200 (elongated) toilet seats* fit the bill. A quick twist on the Lift-Off hinge cap pops the seat off for cleaning, leaving only two small posts on the toilet. According to Bemis, the polypropylene seat also holds up against the chemicals in household cleaners. Prices start at around \$30 for plain white. Most manufacturer-specific colors are also available.

**Contact:** Bemis Manufacturing Company, 300 Mill St., P.O. Box 901, Sheboygan Falls, WI 53085; 800/558-7651; [www.bemismfg.com](http://www.bemismfg.com).



## Bendable Board

It wasn't pretty: The living room was filled with ruined sheets of drywall we were trying to wet down and bend around a two-story barrel-vaulted entry. The drywall was either so wet it wouldn't hold screws, or not wet enough, so it broke as soon as we tried to muscle it into place. Too bad we didn't have *Flextek*, a gypsum board that's made to bend, baby, bend — down to a 12-inch radius when dry. That's tight enough for circular stairwells, column enclosures, and those snaky walls in your lawyer's office. Flextek is available at leading lumberyards for around \$.30 per square foot.

**Contact:** BPB Celotex, 5301 West Cypress St., Suite 300, Tampa, FL 33607; 800/235-6839; [www.bpb-celotex.com](http://www.bpb-celotex.com).



## Easy Hider

A suspended ceiling is often the best way to hide overhead mechanical clutter — but the exposed metal grid leaves something to be desired. That's why Armstrong developed *Optima Vector* (fiberglass) and *Ultima* (mineral fiber) 2x2-foot panels. Instead of dropping in from above, the grooved edge lets you slide them in from underneath. Result: Hardly any of the grid shows, plus the ceiling can be hung closer to whatever is above it. On a remodeling job, you might be able to salvage the old metal, saving time and money. Prices start at approximately \$1.37 per square foot.

**Contact:** Armstrong World Industries, Inc., P.O. Box 3001, Lancaster, PA 17604; 717/397-0611; [www.armstrong.com](http://www.armstrong.com).

