Letters

Fans of Felt

To the Editor:

Regarding the question "Is felt underlayment really necessary?" ("Asphalt Shingle Q&A," 5/02): When a shingle is quickly heated by the sun on a cold morning, the resulting temperature difference above and below the shingle causes condensation under the shingle. Without the felt underlayment, this condensation ends up on the wood sheeting, causing delamination and eventual rot. The felt traps the condensation before it reaches the sheeting, until it eventually evaporates.

As a builder and remodeling contractor in the North Hills of Pittsburgh, I have often seen what happens when the previous contractor failed to replace blown-off felt paper before installing the shingles: Those were the areas where the wood sheeting needed to be replaced.

Mike Blumer
Blumer Contracting
Pittsburgh, Pa.

To the Editor:

To the question "Is felt paper really necessary?" my answer would be a very strong yes. In addition to the reasons stated, felt also keeps the asphalt from leaching out of the shingles into the roof sheathing. I have stripped several roofs where 15-year-old shingles were nailed directly to the roof sheathing without the benefit of felt underlayment. The roof sheathing's top layer was visibly saturated with tar from the shingles, and as a result the shingles became brittle and failed prematurely. In several places, the shingles were melded to the sheathing boards, and a lot of scraping was required to remove the residual asphalt. Keep using felt underlayment — it's a quality feature that shouldn't be left out.

Doug Amsbary
Contractor and builder
Sugar Hill, N.H.

Rotary Laser Comments

To the Editor:

In the article "Visible-Beam Rotary Lasers" (5/02), the accuracy readings given for some of the laser models are not possible. The amount of error at a given distance will double when the distance is doubled. You cannot have an error of 1/8 inch at 75 feet and an error of 3/8 inch at 150 feet, as described for the LaserMark LM30 or our L5. This is indicative of improper methodology.

The author shot benchmarks using a transit that was off by 1/8 inch at 150 feet. How do you test accuracy if you are shooting benchmarks using an instrument about which the author admits, "It's time to have my transit recalibrated"?

The Pro Shot L5 was described as having a bull's-eye vial that was difficult to use. We have heard this complaint from other users, but once they have read or been given the proper technique, virtually all users report that the laser is quick and easy to level.

The author seemed to feel that our recommendation of setting benchmarks when using a laser was a negative about the instrument. A good instrument does not have to be checked for calibration before every job. It should be checked several times a year or after rough treatment. We do recommend setting benchmarks (preferably 90 degrees apart), as they provide a good reference for second-day setups and a means of telling whether the instru-

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Letters

ment has been disturbed.

If you have a laser article in the future, we are willing to work with other manufacturers to set up testing methodology and help check for technical accuracy.

David Kawano
Sales Manager
Laser Reference Inc.
Campbell, Calif.

Gary Katz responds: You are absolutely right about the discrepancy in readings at 75 feet and 150 feet. I was extremely careful in my testing procedures and noticed the same discrepancy; however, I included the readings in my review because I judged that given the dot size of some instruments, and the sensitivity of detectors, the discrepancy was not surprising.

Regarding my accuracy, after setting my transit up, I checked it with a Nikon laser transit and was satisfied that the instrument was within 1/8 inch over 150 feet. That's good enough for me.

Though I am not a scientific testing service, I was able to do what many readers cannot do: test all of these products under real working conditions, against a set of values that most contractors share. I stand by the information provided in my review and believe it was accurate and useful.

Reader Wants More

To the Editor:

I am a ten-year subscriber to *JLC*, and I have always valued your product review articles for their comparative critical content. While other magazines read like infomercials, *JLC*'s articles have always included intelligent, trade-oriented reviews with plenty of direct comparisons and critical content. A price comparison chart was always included.

"Engineered Trim & Siding" in your April 2002 issue does not live up to your high standards. There is limited criticism of any product, no comparisons, and no price information. What happened?

Dave Moore
Woodbridge, Conn.

I-Joist Cutting Jig

To the Editor:

I enjoyed Scott Woelfel's article "Framing Floors With I-Joists" (4/02). Scott says, "Trus Joist used to provide a handy plastic saw guide, but we can't seem to get them anymore." He is referring to the Cutrite; I wanted to assure him that this popular plastic tool is still available from Trus Joist dealers all over North America.

Dede Ryan
Trus Joist
Boise, Idaho

Window Crank Solution

To the Editor:

In the article "Choosing the Right Windows" (*By Design*, 5/02), the author writes about the potential interference between casement and awning crank handles and windowsills. While the suggestion of a round hand knob is certainly viable, these are often more difficult for the homeowner to use, because they don't provide as much torque. A popular solution is the folding handle, which is widely available from major window manufacturers. When not in use, these handles fold out of the way to avoid interference with windowsills, as well as curtains and blinds.

Matt Kottke
Truth Hardware
Owatonna, Minn.

Letters

Pipe Sizing Puzzle

To the Editor:

There's something weird about the pipe sizing table in the article "Sizing Domestic Water Pipes" (3/02). In some cases, the distribution pipe is larger than the service pipe, which would seem to serve no purpose. There doesn't seem to be any way the distribution pipe can carry more water than the service pipe, therefore no reason it would need to be bigger.

Bob Fankhauser
Portland, Ore.

Richard Zannini responds: The reason the distribution pipe may be larger than the service pipe is that water enters the house from the main at higher pressure. Its passage through the pressure-reducing valve ensures safe working pressure inside the house, but the reduction in pressure may also mean that the distribution pipe needs to be larger to ensure adequate supply throughout the house.