

Tie Progress Payments to Start of Events

To the Editor:

I agree with the basic premise concerning progress payments presented in the article "Why Wait to Get Paid" (*Legal Adviser*, 7/02). However, I believe there is one flaw: The author suggests that the progress payment be tied to the completion of an event. I would suggest that it be tied to the start of an event,

when you start to incur costs for

that event. Also, completion can be subjective. Is excavation complete when the hole is dug, when it is backfilled, or when finish grading is complete? It's easy to identify the start of drywall, but when is it complete? When the taping is done or after the final paint touchup?

Using the start of events as milestones for progress payments has been very successful for us. We also receive payment for change orders when they're signed or as part of the next progress payment but before

any additional work is performed.

Steve George, General Manager
Authentic Construction
St. Paul, Minn.

Sealing Dutch Doors

To the Editor:

I've been a custom door maker for 32 years and would like to add an important point to Dave Frane's response about making a Dutch door (*Q&A*, 8/02). I've done quite a few Dutch doors, and they present a particular problem in an exterior



It's your birthday, too

As you probably noticed from the cover, *JLC* turns 20 this month. In the 12 years I've been here, the magazine has changed size five times and changed hands twice. It's also changed appearance, going from black-and-white to color and adding many more photos and illustrations than it ever had in its first decade.

What hasn't changed is *JLC*'s commitment to bringing you the best, most relevant information available to help you run your business.

And what makes it click is you — the custom builders and remodelers who share your thoughts with us, who let us onto your job sites with our cameras, who tell your stories and willingly pass on your hard-earned experience to other professionals, and who read the magazine and support us with your wallets. Not only is *JLC* for and about you, it wouldn't exist without you. So we hope you'll join us in wishing *JLC* many happy returns.

In the spirit of looking back, we've done something a little different with this issue. First, you may notice some columns you

haven't seen for a while — *Practical Engineering*, *Focus on Energy*, *State-of-the-Art Contractor*. Longtime readers may also recognize some former columnists who have returned for the celebration. Gordon Tully, who wrote our *Building With Style* column for more than ten years, offers this month's *By Design* column. "Rural GP engineer" Harris Hyman, a frequent *JLC* author over the last 20 years, is back with the *Practical Engineering* column. Alex Wilson, editor of *Environmental Building News*, has returned to write *Focus on Energy*, a column that he launched and wrote for several years in the '80s. Our old friend Michael Byrne — aka Dr. Tile — is here with this month's *Kitchen & Bath* column. Craig Savage, who in the early '90s was doing business online before the rest of us knew there was such a place, is back with *State-of-the-Art Contractor*. Clayton Dekorne, former *JLC* senior editor and founding editor of *Tools of the Trade* magazine, weighs in on worm-drive saws in *Toolbox*. And finally, longtime *JLC* contributor and adviser Paul Fiset gives us this

month's *Resources* column, while Sal Alfano, former *JLC* editor and current editor of *Remodeling* magazine, has returned with *Strictly Business*.

The middle of the magazine looks a bit different, too. We've abandoned our usual mix of feature stories and have instead culled some of *JLC*'s best and most practical illustrations — most of them from the last decade — on a variety of framing and foundation topics. We've referenced the story source in case you want to read more, but we think in most cases you'll find that the pictures tell you what you need to know. You'll find some details here that you may have forgotten, overlooked, or never had the opportunity to see. We hope you'll clip them, copy them, hand them out for training, put them to use on the job site. They are in large part the work of our illustrator, Tim Healey, who also created this month's cover.

Let us know what you think of the issue, and thanks for your continued support.

Don Jackson
JLC Editor

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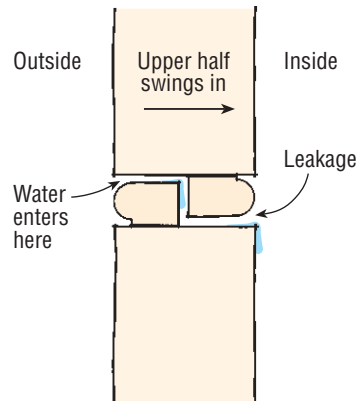
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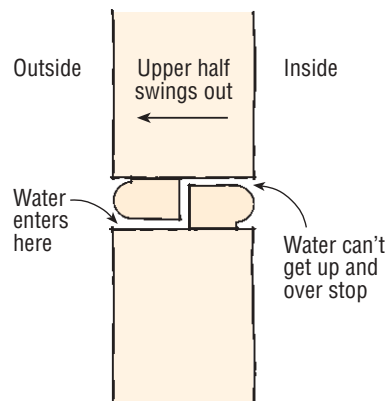
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Letters

Dutch Door



In-Swinging



Out-Swinging

opening. If rain hits the outside of the door, it's nearly impossible to prevent leakage at the division between the upper and lower halves unless the door swings to the exterior.

In the case of in-swinging doors (the standard), water enters the space between the two door halves on the upper side of the stop, which is attached to the lower door half. The water moves across the top of the stop, runs down the inside edge of the stop, across the top of the lower door half, and down the inside face of the door. Bingo! You've got water on the floor inside. Even if some type of pressure-fit weatherstripping is used between the halves, which will increase the difficulty of bolting them together, leakage at one or both ends is likely.

The only positive way to avoid this problem is to install the door so that it swings outward, reversing the positions of the stops. When water enters below the stop attached to the upper door half, it cannot get up and over the stop attached to the lower door half. That stop acts as a dam and effectively prevents leakage. If the door is protected so that no rain ever touches it, never mind.

Peter Good
Oakland, Calif.

Is Felt Bad for You?

To the Editor:

I read with interest Howard Brickman's answer to the question of asphalt-saturated felt vs. red rosin paper. His points are well taken and are the ones I've heard consistently before from flooring professionals. However, I pondered the question of what material to use as a hardwood underlayment long and hard ten years ago and decided to stop using asphalt-saturated felt. I build extremely tight homes, and even with mechanical ventilation I'm concerned with the indoor air quality. My rationale for avoiding asphalt-saturated felt is the same as for using low- or no-VOC paints, urea-formaldehyde-free MDF and plywood, and so on — to eliminate source contaminants.

To minimize moisture diffusion into wood flooring over basements and crawlspaces, I seal the tongue-and-groove edges of structural subfloor panels as well as the butt edges with adhesive. I've monitored the hardwood floor performance on many of my custom homes during regular visits to clients and have found the floors to be squeak free and dimensionally stable. Sure, I'm "breaking the rules" by using red rosin paper, but is there any alternative underlayment material to asphalt-saturated felt that is healthier for my clients?

Mike Guertin
East Greenwich, R.I.

Howard Brickman responds: I have heard comments similar to Mr. Guertin's from others. I believe that sealing the edges of subfloor panels does little to prevent water vapor diffusion through the body of the panel. On the other hand, asphalt-saturated felt does not prevent vapor diffusion, either; it merely slows it down.

While striving to build more healthful houses is a fine goal, the reality is that builders of tight houses can't control the indoor air pollution created by the fabrics, cushions, and finishes used in furniture and other fixtures. On the scale of possible health hazards, I would say felt is like coffee: There is always someone trying to find fault with it, but the only risk I am certain of is that someone may drop a roll of it on your foot.

Bad Gas a Myth?

To the Editor:

I found the article "Shopping for a Generator" (8/02) very informative. However, I would like to challenge the statement that gas can "go bad during a period of non-use" and cause a generator to die. I believe that's a myth that engine manufacturers perpetuate to sidestep their warranties.

I corresponded with an engineer at one of the large gasoline companies, and though he said he personally believed gas could go bad from non-use, the only research he was aware of spoke to the contrary. After first removing the rust and water, researchers tested two- to three-year-old gasoline that had been stored in a normal gas can. They found no drop in octane and no loss in the gas's abil-

ity to do what it was manufactured to do. The same engineer wasn't aware of any other research in progress.

I've used the same lawnmowers for decades. I never drain the gas tank for winter storage and have never had a problem starting up in the spring. The same is true for my tarkettle and other power equipment.

Les Deal
Cedar Rapids, Iowa