

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Foundation Insulation

An easy and inexpensive way to insulate foundation walls has proved elusive for many builders, but CertainTeed's new *Basement Wall Insulation* promises to make the process faster and easier. Faced with reinforced polypropylene or foil, the insulation is available in $\frac{3}{4}$ -, $1\frac{3}{4}$ -, and $3\frac{1}{8}$ -inch thicknesses, with respective R-values of 3, 6, and 11. The insulation hung from the sill plate can be left exposed in most residential applications. Installed costs vary, but expect to pay about \$.60 to \$.80 per square foot.

CertainTeed, 800/233-8990, www.certainteed.com.



Sturdy Stand

A well-made stand for your portable planer, table saw, or miter saw can make the difference between an easy task and complete frustration. The 6132 *Work Station's* 300-pound capacity and adjustable top provide a sturdy and convenient stand for most bench-top tools. The powder-coated steel frame includes rubber footpads and a leveling leg for stability. It retails for \$39.

Wolfcraft, 630/773-4777, www.wolfcraft.com.



Mold- and Waterproof Paint

In response to the current concern over mold, *Kwik Seal Plus Basement Paint* is one of the more recent products to have Microban added to its formula. The antimicrobial additive, more traditionally used in socks, cutting boards, and kitchen sponges, provides long-term protection against mold and odor-causing bacteria, according to the manufacturer. The tintable, white latex basement paint resists water pressure up to 5 psi and is available in 1- and $3\frac{1}{2}$ -gallon containers. It sells for about \$25 per gallon.

DAP, 888/327-8477, www.dap.com.



Cut-to-Fit Basement Windows

Although not the most exciting fenestrations in the house, basement windows provide necessary ventilation and light in an otherwise dark and dreary space. Available in clear glass or privacy-enhancing

glass block, *Hopper Windows* feature a one-piece injection-molded

frame to minimize air infiltration and provide long-term durability. Most notable are the trimmable jamb and sill flanges, allowing the windows to fit openings from 32 to 33 inches wide. The units are available in white and tan. Prices start at \$124 for ten or more; single units start at \$175.

Simonton Windows, 800/746-6686, www.simonton.com.



ON THE JOB

When Greg McCarren started in the hearth industry over 20 years ago, there was little regulation on air quality indoors or out. As building codes changed, he feared new regulations might eventually eliminate wood fireplaces from new construction. Minnesota and Oregon, for example, now require the installation of fresh-air systems to replace the air lost up the chimney and the air used for combustion. Such regulations are meant to address the negative air pressure created by the fireplace inside the home. Negative pressure not only causes the fireplace to draw poorly, but it's also a threat to health when backdrafting results. Because the hearth industry didn't have a product to satisfy the new requirements, Greg invented one.

His creation, the Replenum, mounts on top of a manufactured fireplace and replaces the air consumed by the fireplace with fresh air from outside the building. The replacement air is warmed by a stainless-steel heat exchanger, using heat that would ordinarily be lost up the chimney.

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Installing a Replenum requires a 37-inch-tall, 24¹/₂-inch-wide, and 15-inch-deep cavity above the fireplace. The unit can be rotated on the flue collar to aid in positioning as long as a 2-inch air space from combustibles is maintained.



Keeping duct runs as straight as possible makes the recovery ventilator more efficient. The easiest way to accomplish this is straight through the back of the chase and straight through the interior wall, but the owner of this home wanted the exterior grill in a less obvious location, which required additional elbows.

Smaller Sander

With a 3¹/₂-inch disc, Metabo's model SXE400 Random Orbital Disc Sander works in places that an ordinary sander simply won't fit. Running at a maximum 10,000 orbits per second, the variable-speed machine weighs about 3 pounds and includes an on-board dust extraction system. The replaceable hook and loop pad orbits in a 1/8-inch pattern. The maker claims that the tool's small sanding disc is especially suited for concave and convex surfaces, and triple-sealed bearings provide longer life. The street price is \$139.

Metabo, 800/638-2264, www.metabousa.com.



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In addition, a 110-volt inducer fan keeps combustion gases moving up the flue, eliminating the poor drafting common in today's tighter homes. Activated by a thermal switch, the unit automatically starts when a fire is lit, so homeowners don't need to remember to turn it on. When the fire dies, the heat-recovery blower continues for a short time, capturing the remaining heat in the exchanger.

Because the unit requires 110-volt AC power, it had to pass UL standard 127, which tests for safe operation, without electricity (when homeowners are most likely to use a fireplace). The UL standard, which all manufactured fireplaces must meet, tests how the unit will perform when the firebox is refueled every 7½ minutes with special high-output solid fuel. The unit passed the test and, according to the maker, performs as well as an

It's important to balance the amount of air going up the flue and the air supplying the home. While one installer checks the measurements with a vane anemometer, another reaches inside the access panel to adjust the fan speed.



A 13x21-inch access panel is required for installation and servicing. The intake grill supplying the heat exchanger is located above the access panel, where it's less obtrusive. It's important to consider other exhaust vents, flues, and plumbing vents when locating the supply grill; otherwise, contaminated air could be drawn into the living space. The required clearances are included in the Replenum's well-written instructions.

ordinary fireplace even without power.

Installing a Replenum adds about a half day's work to an ordinary manufactured fireplace installation. Finishing the exterior access panel also adds some time.

Presently, the unit is certified only for use with Temko brand fireplaces, because of the expense associated with UL approval. The manufacturer expects to have most other major fireplace manufacturers approved within two years. The company is also planning the introduction of a unit for masonry fireplaces in a similar time frame. The unit has a list price of approximately \$1,400.

Condar, 828/894-8383, www.fireplacehrv.com.

Include the Kitchen Sink

Functioning in a home without a kitchen can raise any homeowner's stress level, and a stressed homeowner can create unnecessary stress for you. You can minimize your customer's inconvenience with a *Portable Kitchenette*. The stainless-steel work center gives your clients a sink and room for food preparation in a self-contained, easy-to-clean unit. The 420-pound unit features a pullout butcher-block cutting board, 16x12-inch sink, food storage drawers, and a stainless countertop. Removable drawers and casters make transporting easier, and it fits in the back of a pickup. You can lease the unit from the maker for \$150 monthly or \$1,500 a year, plus shipping. Or you can buy it for \$2,500, plus shipping.

Diversified Metal, 510/667-9900, www.mobilekitchenette.com.



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Powerful Phone Jack

It used to be when you wanted a phone, you simply plugged into a jack and got a dial tone.

But today's cordless phones and answering machines require an AC outlet, limiting where you can put the phone and tying up an outlet with a big, bulky converter. Enter

Leviton's *Out-of-Sight Power Jack*, a phone jack that includes a DC power supply for cordless phones and answering machines. The jack has six common plug adapters and adjustable settings from 7 to 12 volts, making it compatible with most phones, according to the manufacturer. It sells for \$20.

Leviton, 800/323-8920, www.leviton.com.



Fire Fighter

Sensing heat instead of smoke, the new *HD6135FB Heat Alarm* is suited to spaces like kitchens and garages, where traditional smoke detectors can create nuisance alarms. The hard-wired alarm has a 9-volt battery backup and can be interconnected with more traditional smoke detectors. It can also be tested or silenced with most TV remote controls. The microprocessor-controlled alarm sounds an 85-decibel siren at 135°F or after detecting a 15-degree-per-minute temperature rise. The alarm retails for \$28.

BRK Electronics, 800/323-9005,
www.brkelectronics.com.



Durable Landscape Ties

Because they're made in large part from the plastic and nonmetal components of recycled automobiles, XPotential Products claims that its *Impact Posts*, *Landscape Ties*, and *Impact Curbs* will last for 75 to 100 years. According to the manufacturer, the products won't warp, split, or decay and have twice the fastener-holding ability of comparable products. The naturally brown material can be painted or stained, but cutting and drilling require abrasive or carbide-tipped tools. A 4x4x8 post retails for between \$9 and \$11 and a 6x6x8 for between \$20 and \$25.

XPotential Products, 800/863-6619, www.xpotentialproducts.com.



Tailgate Stepladder

It probably wasn't a big deal when you first started out, but climbing into the back of your truck gets harder as time goes by. Installing a *Gate-or-Step* on your truck's tailgate makes climbing in and out of the bed a lot easier, according to the maker. The lightweight aluminum stepladder unfolds in seconds, features nonslip treads and quick-release pins for easy removal, and sells for \$149.

Gate-or-Step, 603/624-2717, www.gateorstep.com.

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Bendable Bit

Fishing wires is never an easy task, but having a drill bit that bends around obstacles can make the process a little less aggravating. Made from heat-treated spring steel, *Flexible Drill Bits* are available in lengths from 2 feet to 6 feet. After drilling, the wire can be tied on to the bit through a small hole and pulled back through the opening. Sizes from 1/4 inch to 3/4 inch are available in auger, twist, and masonry styles. Prices run from \$23 to \$40.

Ideal, 800/435-0705, www.idealindustries.com.



Big Router

Because large routers are frequently used with a router table, Milwaukee has added some cool, ease-of-use features to its *5625-20 Fixed-Base Router*. The variable-speed (10,000- to 22,000-rpm) 3 1/2-horsepower router has a 15-amp motor and feed-back circuitry for consistent speed and power. Depth adjustment can be made from above the table by inserting the included T- handled wrench

through the router's base. The design eliminates reaching under the table to adjust bit height. A coarse setting adjusts the bit to within 1/8 inch, and a micro-fine adjusting knob can fine-tune the setting to 1/64 of an inch. The street price is \$295.

Milwaukee, 877/729-

3878, www.mil-electrictool.com.



Problem-Solving Post Cover

Promising an end to painting and the elimination of checked and cracked 6x6 posts, the *Sheerline PVC post system* slips over an ordinary pressure-treated wood post to provide a durable, attractive, and maintenance-free finish.



A matching aluminum base for mounting on concrete is also available, along with matching caps. Covering a post requires four individual pieces, which are sold in 8 1/2-foot and 10-foot lengths. An 8 1/2-foot post costs about \$52 to cover, a 10-foot post about \$60.

L.B. Plastics, 800/752-7739, www.lbplastics.com.

Moldable Molding

While increasingly popular, curved walls and architectural elements make installing trim a challenge. But Style Solution's new polyurethane *Flexible Moulding* makes curved work easier. Designed to match most popular molding profiles, the new line can be flexed to fit both inside and outside curves and can be bent in a compound radius, like curved stairways. According to the manufacturer, the product has greater flexibility than flexible vinyl moldings, and the factory-applied primer won't peel when flexed. According to the maker, pricing is similar to that of vinyl-based flexible moldings.

Style Solutions, 800/446-3040, www.stylesolutionsinc.com.



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Access Insulator

The Department of Energy cites the common pull-down attic access as one of the biggest energy wasters in most homes. Seven states



now require insulation on the opening in an effort to reduce heating and cooling losses. The *Draft Cap*, a polystyrene dome, covers the top of the attic access and insulates it with an R-12 rating. The lightweight cap installs without assembly and costs \$100.

Draft Cap, 888/292-2229, www.draftcap.com.

Boot Dryer

Outdoor work is one of the realities of building or remodeling, even when the weather is uncoop-



erative. When nasty weather soaks your shoes and gloves, the *Dry-Doc* can help. By circulating air through multiple ports, the *Dry-Doc* dries your gear with-

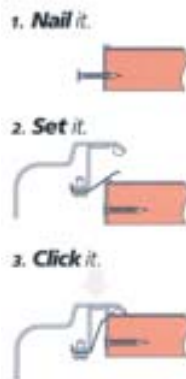
out damaging heat, while an integral Drip Lip tray catches slush and run off, preventing a wet mess in your house. With a handy seat on top for lacing up, the *Dry-Doc* will dry out gloves and boots within hours. The AC-powered unit sells for \$50.

SMC Innovations, 866/450-0200, www.dry-doc.com.

Faster Sink Installations

Offering the lowest installed cost, drop-in stainless sinks are the most popular

option for multifamily and low-cost construction projects. But squeezing under those annoying clips is a chore that every installer would happily avoid. The new *Quick-Clip fastening system* installs from the top, making installation faster and easier. Available on Elkay's Lustertone line of sinks, the product is



ideal for multiple sink installations and installs in half the time of a conventional system, according to the maker. An 8-inch-deep double bowl lists for \$585.

Elkay, 630/572-3192, www.elkay.com.