

Products

by Patrick McCombe

Better Box

It's tough to get excited about electrical work boxes, but the new design from Smart Box is actually pretty cool. Instead of nails, the sturdy plastic boxes are mounted with a couple of angled drywall screws that fasten from inside the box. The unique design makes the boxes good for both new and old work. It also makes them good for narrow stud cavities and other places where you can't swing a hammer. They're available in one- to four-gang sizes, and you can use them with light-gauge steel and wood framing. Prices run about \$1 to \$5 each, depending on the size.

Smart Box, 631/968-5603, www.smartboxinc.com.



Slim Fan for Tight Spaces

It's no accident that Panasonic has become the industry standard for upgraded ventilation fans. The well-made products are extremely quiet, and they're rated for continuous operation, so they can be used as part of a whole-house ventilation strategy. One of the newest offerings is the *Whisperfit*, which has a slimmed-down housing so you can squeeze it into a 2x6 joist or stud cavity. Depending on the size, the product operates at .7 to 1.5 sones and moves up to 90 cfm of air. It costs about \$100 at www.efi.org.

Panasonic, 866/292-7292, www.panasonic.com/building.



Window Wrapping

Wrapping window and door openings with self-adhering membrane is increasingly popular and always a good building practice. But the one-piece release papers on most membranes make it tougher to integrate the product into a drainage plane and make troublesome reverse laps more likely. Grace's *Vycor Plus* now has what the manufacturer calls a "ripcord" embedded in the adhesive, and it makes splitting the release paper into two parts much easier. With the paper split, you can adhere the membrane to the window opening and leave on the remaining release paper until it's time to install the housewrap or felt. The two-piece paper also aids in positioning the sticky membrane.

Grace Construction Products, 866/333-3726, www.graceconstruction.com.



Tarp Tiedown

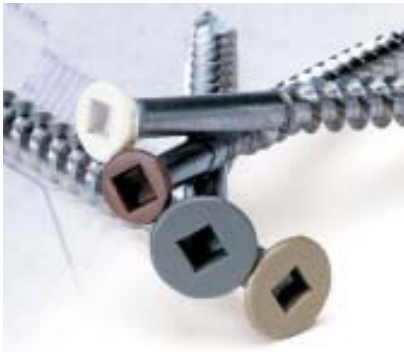
Pick any construction site, and you're about as likely to see a blue tarp as a circular saw. Almost as common are tarps with their grommets torn out or missing altogether. If your tarp is missing grommets but still has some useful life, you can secure it with *Super Snap Reusable Grommets*. The plastic tie loops are also great for adding attachment points where you need them or making tarps out of poly sheeting. A four-pack costs about \$5, and they're available at most home centers. Throwing a couple of packs into the glove compartment or toolbox seems like a good idea — you never know when they'll come in handy.

Creative Sales, 866/869-8115, www.supersharpener.com.

DECKS AND RAILINGS

Have a Ball. If your customers want a little more elegance from their outdoor spaces, you could suggest upgrading their balusters from treated 2x2s to round aluminum. Round balusters have a touch more class and require no painting or maintenance. The only problem with the system is the need to drill perhaps hundreds of holes in the top and bottom rails to receive the tubes. But the Railwayz Uni-ball Baluster Connector fastens directly to the top and bottom rails and eliminates all of the drilling. Ribbed balls hold the balusters tight and allow angling for stairs and other sloped applications. The Uni-ball system with aluminum balusters runs about \$6.50 per lineal foot.

Railwayz, 866/411-7245, www.railwayz.com.



Top Coat. More and more decks are being built with premium hardwoods and composite materials, and stainless-steel fasteners are a perfect match for those long-lasting materials. But hundreds or even thousands of shiny screw heads can be a real distraction on an otherwise beautiful deck surface. Now you can match the fasteners to the material, making them less visible. Deckfast paints the heads on its *Headcote Stainless Steel Screws* with a durable epoxy finish. The screws are available in conventional and trim head styles in gray, tan, dark brown, and white. The white finish is great for plastic and composite trim. You can find them in the McFeeley's catalog (800/443-7937) or online (www.mcfeeleys.com); prices run about \$11 per pound.

Starborn Industries, 800/596-7747, www.headcote.com.



Stone Zone. Even exotic hardwood decking is old news now, so if your customer wants something completely beyond the ordinary, you could try *Stone Deck*. The 16x16-inch stone tiles can replace ordinary wood or composite decking and provide your customer with a deck surface that's truly unique. According to the manufacturer, the deck surface has between 5,000 and 10,000 psf of flexural strength (depending on the type of stone) and requires minimal maintenance. The tiles are shipped in 178-square-foot pallets, and prices start about \$15 per square foot. Just make sure to plan for the eight or nine pounds of added dead load.

Deck Technologies, 651/459-3049, www.stonedeck.biz.



EZ Iron. Wrought-iron railings and balusters give a touch of class to outdoor living spaces, and customers love the historic look. But if your metal-working skills are a little rusty, you might look to Fortress Iron. The company offers a complete line of prefabricated iron rail panels with matching gates and hardware. The 93¹/₂-inch panels are fully assembled and require no welding or fabrication for mounting. Your customers can even

add 12-inch decorative inserts to personalize the look. The system seems like a great way to speed up the process of building metal railings, as well as to offer your customer something a little different. Prices run from \$9 to \$14 per lineal foot, depending on options.

Fortress Iron, 800/346-8435, www.fortressiron.com.

DECKS AND RAILINGS

Post Topper. Topping off a pressure-treated or cedar deck post couldn't be easier. *Postcaps* from Maine Ornamental, available in pressure-treated, cedar, mahogany, and redwood, slip over a 4-inch or 6-inch post, adding a nice finishing touch and hiding less-than-perfect cuts. They come in ball-topped, flat, and pyramid-shaped profiles in finishes from natural wood to polished brass and bright white. Prices run from \$8 to \$20 each.

Maine Ornamental Woodworkers,
866/780-3507, www.postcaps.com.



Cable Way. If obscuring a beautiful sunset or mountain vista with a busy railing or balustrade is out of the question, you could suggest a good-looking and sturdy *CableRail Assembly* from Feeney. The 1/8-inch wire assemblies have turnbuckle-style tensioning hardware on one end and "one-way" quick-connect fittings on the other. Special hardware and washers for stairs and other sloped applications are available, and the assemblies can be

used with both wood and metal posts. A 20-foot long, 36-inch-high railing with ten cable assemblies runs about \$16 per foot. Pricing doesn't include a top rail or posts.

Feeney Wire Rope & Rigging, 800/888-2418,
www.feeneywire.com.

DOOR HARDWARE

High Security. Even the highest-quality deadbolt and lockset provide little protection from a flat bar. And the intruder can enter the home without making a lot of noise. While no lock system will stop a criminal who's really intent on breaking in, you can slow them down with a multi-point locking system from Therma-Tru. The improved locking system features stainless-steel head and foot bolts and a locking tongue at the strike. According to the manufacturer, the locking points can't be engaged unless the door is closed and latched, which prevents damage to the casing and sill. The upgrade is available on all of Therma-Tru's entry doors and adds about \$400 to the list price.

Therma-Tru, 800/537-8827, www.thermatru.com.



Bronzed Beauty. If your customer is looking for door hardware that's truly unique, you could suggest one of the offerings from Rocky Mountain Hardware. Their beautiful bronze castings are all individually distressed, making each one a little different. The sand-casted bronze darkens as it ages. So unlike most "bronze" finishes that are actually painted brass or steel, the finish won't wear off. In addition to good looks, the products have sturdy springs in their lever sets and knobs, so they won't go limp over time. Prices for the *Builder's Series* start at about \$200 list.

Rocky Mountain Hardware, 888/788-2013, www.rockymountainhardware.com.



Wide View. Capturing a scenic vista with a 6- or even an 8-foot patio door is tough, but special hardware on Weather Shields' *Telescopic Sliding Glass Door* means you can frame a scenic view with patio doors as wide as 19 feet. The stacking design allows up to six operating panels (three on each side), and the coupling flange means that when one panel is opened or closed, the remaining panels follow. According to the manufacturer, 1 1/2-inch ball-bearing rollers make the heavy doors easy to operate, and coastal-grade stainless-steel hardware and fasteners are standard.

Weather Shield, 800/477-6808, www.weathershield.com.



INSULATION AND AIR SEALING

Denim Draft Stopper. What's worse than installing fiberglass building insulation? Not much. Instead of itchy and irritating insulating products, how about one that's about as comfortable as an old pair of jeans?



Ultra Touch Cotton Fiber Insulation is made largely from denim scraps, so handling and installing the product requires no protective equipment or other special measures. According to the manufacturer, the borate-treated product performs better than fiberglass in extreme cold, is not as attractive to rodents and insects, and has excellent fire resistance (class 1). The 3 1/2-inch, R-13 product runs about 50¢ per square foot, and the 5 1/2-inch, R-19 runs about 70¢ per square foot.

Bonded Logic, 480/812-9114,
www.bondedlogic.com.

Soy-Based Foam. Spray-in-place foam is among the best-performing insulation products; builders applaud its air-sealing and moisture-management properties. But most spray foams have a petroleum base that's a thorn in the side of many environmentally conscious consumers and builders. *BioBased 501 Spray-in-Place Foam* is soybean based, making it more appealing to the eco conscience. According to the maker, the foam is pest resistant and has all of the other attributes of more typical spray-in-place foams. Installed prices run about 85¢ to \$1.25 per square foot.



BioBased Systems, 800/803-5189, www.biobased.net.



Backer. Take a good look at just about any tube of caulking, and the directions will tell you to install foam backer rod before filling gaps greater than 1/2 inch. That's all well and good, but have you ever tried to actually buy backer rod? Unless you have a supplier that's really into weatherization supplies, the inexpensive yet important product is hard to find. That may be changing. Dap has introduced its own backer rod, and any dealer who sells its widely accepted caulks and sealants should carry the rod as well. Ask them.

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



A Foam for All Seasons.

Promising a wider temperature range for installation and better performance than typical foam sealants, Dow's *Great Stuff Pro* is the newest addition to the company's line of urethane sealants. The Pro line includes expanding, minimal-expanding and low-pressure formulas, as well as four dispensing guns. The low-pressure formula is probably the most noteworthy. Designed specifically for sealing around doors and windows, it won't distort window frames and doorjamb while it cures, and it stays soft to better accommodate seasonal movement. Minimal-expanding and expanding formulas sell for \$8 to \$10 per can; the window and door formula goes for \$10 to \$12 per can.

Dow, 888/668-3801, www.dowgreatstuff.com.

ON THE JOB

Fast-Acting High-Performance Glue

By Derrell Day

FastCap (888/443-3748, www.fastcap.com) recently introduced a new CA (cyanoacrylate) glue, 2P-10, that's fast setting and virtually unbreakable. As a test, I mitered and glued several 4-inch pieces of base-board together, and no one's been able to break them apart yet. At least not without stomping on them.


Like most industrial CA-type glues, 2P-10 comes in two parts. The adhesive is dispensed from a squeeze bottle, and the activator comes in a separate aerosol can. It's available in three formulas: medium viscosity for melamine and smooth surfaces, thick for raw wood-to-wood, and a gel for heavier and vertical applications. What's great about this product is how fast it sets. Glued miter returns are done in about 15 seconds without a visible glue line, and, unlike most other CA glues, no white residue is left behind.

Most of my work is stain grade, and this glue even works on joints that are still wet with oil-based stain. I always keep a stain pot at my miter table so I can touch up after making a cut. After I've wiped away the excess stain, I can glue the joint right away. The difficult part is getting the parts aligned quickly and holding them tightly, while simultaneously "rolling" your fingers away from the joint. If you aren't careful, you can become a part of your work. A debonder is available and is probably a good investment.

I haven't touched a miter clamp since I started using this product. I

apply the glue to one side of the joint and spray the activator directly onto the glue. At first, I

sprayed the activator on the opposing piece as suggested by the instructions, but I found applying the activator to the glue really speeds things up. I've been able to speed up the bond time to about 8 seconds. The glue completely cures in about 30 seconds when you apply the accelerator, but if you need a little more working time, you don't have to use it.

As for shelf life, I've had the product for about four months, and even though the label says store at 70°F, I keep it in my tool trailer, which can reach about 130°F during the day. I haven't detected any change in performance or viscosity, and I haven't had a joint failure ever. I've used this stuff on MDF and various woods, all with excellent results, and I haven't noticed any lingering or obnoxious odors. Even though \$30 for an 8-ounce bottle seems a little pricey, the bottle (thick formula) I've been using for four months is still half full. What I've saved in time far outweighs the cost of the glue. This is the good stuff — what more can I say? 

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