

by Patrick McCombe

Innovative Products

FOR BUILDERS & REMODELERS

Our annual pick of products designed to help you work faster, better, and smarter

Dry Feet

Footing drains are one of those things that your customers will never see and probably won't get too excited about — until water starts seeping into their basement. Perforated pipe and stone work fine, but if you're looking for a faster method, you might try the *DrainStar*. At 12 inches high and covered with a filter fabric, DrainStar eliminates the gravel and, according to the manufacturer, installs faster than pipe. Special adapters allow connections to standard 4-inch pipe for getting the water to daylight. Prices are said to be comparable to those for conventional perforated pipe and stone.

Tremco Barrier Solutions, 800/876-5624, www.guaranteeddrybasements.com.



Cutting It Close

I-joist manufacturers are very specific about the size and location of holes for plumbing and mechanicals, and cutting nonstandard holes or getting too close to chords or bearing points can create a problem. Fortunately, the fix doesn't have to be. *ReWeb* is a 16-gauge repair plate that has a higher load rating than any joist presently on the market. In addition to fixing a botched joist, you can use it to sturdy a joist when you can't run a pipe or duct anywhere else. The U-shaped design means that the ReWeb can be installed in repair situations without removing the offending obstacle. They're available in several sizes and sell for about \$35.

Matrix Xtreme, 866/320-5340, www.matrixxtreme.com.



Corrosive Personality

Since the phaseout of CCA-treated lumber, deck builders have complained that the new pressure-treating formulas start rusting connectors and fasteners at an accelerated rate. *Deck Protector* is a 4-inch-wide self-adhering flashing that isolates the lumber so that corrosive chemicals have less contact with metal connectors and fittings. The manufacturer says that a layer on the top side of the joists also prevents water from following deck screws and nails into the joist center, allowing decks, docks, and other outdoor structures to last longer. A 4-inch by 75-foot roll sells for about \$20.

Grace Construction Products, 800/354-5414, www.graceconstruction.com.



Faster Flashing

Pipes and electrical boxes on exterior walls can provide an easy route for water to get inside the structure, and caulks and sealants are a temporary fix at best. But you can permanently seal around pipes and electrical boxes with *Quick Flash*. The little plastic flashings are easily integrated into a drainage plane, and the snug-fitting flexible seals allow seasonal movement while preventing air and water intrusion. They're available for pipes up to 4 inches in diameter and for single-gang and round electrical boxes. They sell for \$4.75.

Quickflash Waterproofing Products, 714/596-3800, www.quickflashproducts.com.

New Quickflash Way



(Lathed In)



Sound-Stopping Gaskets

Putting gaskets between building panels and framing members is one of the best ways to reduce sound transmission and prevent air leakage. Unfortunately, many framers think that gasket systems are too labor intensive and finicky for production building. *Integrity Construction Gaskets* install faster than most, thanks to a rolling dispenser that straddles the framing member and adjusts from 1½ to 3 inches wide. The ⅛-inch-thick self-adhesive gaskets are sold in 1⅞-, 2¼-, and 3⅛-inch widths, and, according to the maker, the pressure-sensitive adhesive sticks to both wood and metal framing. They cost about 10¢ a foot.

Shadwell Company, 800/494-4148, www.integritygasket.com.



Combo Housewrap

Rainscreen siding combined with an effective drainage plane is one of the best systems for preventing water infiltration and giving paints and stains their best chance at a long life. But furring out your siding and properly detailing flashings and housewrap does take some extra time. Benjamin Obdyke's new *Home Slicker Plus Typar* combines the popular housewrap with a plastic matrix that holds the siding about 1/4 inch from the sheathing, so any moisture that finds its way behind the siding will run out the bottom. It saves you the additional step of installing the matrix once the housewrap and flashings are in place. A 39-inch-wide roll covers 200 square feet and sells for about \$120.

Benjamin Obdyke, 800/523-5261, www.benjaminobdyke.com.



R-Value Verifier

One of the commonly cited weaknesses of blow-in insulation systems is having to determine whether the product has been installed to the specified density — if it hasn't, performance could be significantly affected. Owens Corning, trying to get better acceptance of blown-in fiberglass, has offered its certified installers a simple instrument to assure builders and homeowners that there's enough fluffy stuff in the wall. The *Inspect-R Density Gauge* is easy to use and appears very rugged. Insulating a 2x4 wall with the Pro Pink system costs about 75¢ per square foot; 2x6 walls cost around \$1.25.

Owens Corning, 800/438-7465, www.owenscorning.com.



Brainy Barrier

If you're concerned that the poly in your walls could prevent drying and lead to moisture damage or mold, you might consider the *MemBrain* vapor barrier from CertainTeed. Billed as the first "smart" vapor barrier, MemBrain's permeability varies from 1 perm during dry conditions to more than 20 perms at high humidity. The variable permeability allows wall assemblies to dry when wetted, yet it also prevents vapor from migrating into wall cavities. The maker says that the 2-mil-thick product is as strong as 6-mil polyethylene and would cost about \$350 for a 2,400-square-foot house.

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



Long-Lasting Flashing

Copper is beautiful and long lasting, but it's also expensive and reacts badly with ACQ-treated lumber. *YorkShield 106 HP Flashing* uses a 3-, 5-, or 7-ounce layer of copper (compared to 16- or 20-ounce for solid copper) bonded to a mesh substrate. The reinforcing mesh adhered with a waterproof adhesive protects the copper from pressure-treated wood and makes it less expensive than solid copper. The thin copper layer means it's easier to form and cuts with scissors. York HP is available in several thicknesses and roll sizes. Prices start at about \$16 for a 20-foot roll of 8-inch flashing.

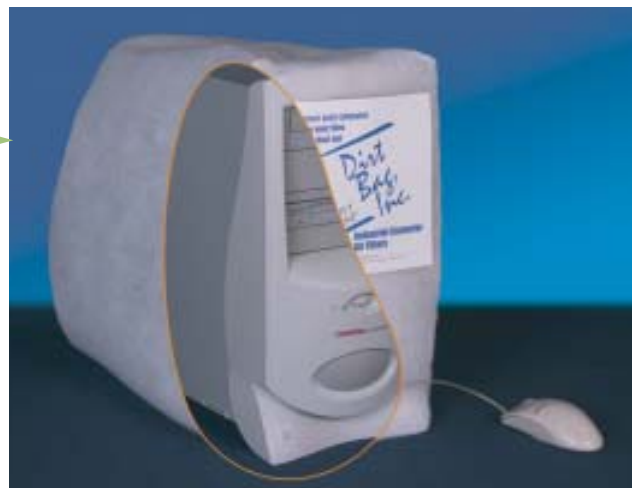
York Manufacturing, 800/551-2828, www.yorkmfg.com.



Call Me Dusty

Dusty shops and construction trailers aren't the best places for expensive computer equipment. Airborne grit can destroy your hard drive, leaving you without your most important business tool. You can provide a little more protection for your important records and expensive electronics with the *Dirt Bag*. The breathable bag prevents dust and dirt from reaching internal components, and Velcro flaps protect CD and DVD drives. It sells for about \$20.

Dirt Bag, 906/337-2433, www.dirtbag.biz.



New Glue

Titebond wood glue has been around for a long time, but carpenters and woodworkers now have more adhesive choices than ever, so the company has developed a new waterproof formula to keep pace. *Titebond III Ultimate Wood Glue* offers several advantages over previous Titebond formulas including a longer working time, greater strength, and freeze-thaw stability. It works in temperatures as low as 47°F and lasts up to 12 months in a sealed container. Early response from builders and woodworkers has been very favorable. A quart sells for about \$14.

Franklin International, 800/877-4583, www.titebond.com.



Ultimate Replacement Window

Replacement windows usually involve a compromise in aesthetics, but if you're looking for a wood replacement window that can match just about any architectural style, you might consider Marvin's *Ultimate Insert Double Hung*. Based on the company's popular Ultimate Double Hung for new construction, the replacement version uses the same hardware and comes in an equal number of authentic and simulated light patterns. Unlike many other wood replacement windows that include only the sash and balances, the Ultimate Insert comes assembled in a frame for easier installation.

Marvin, 888/537-8266, www.marvin.com.



Get the Blues

Doorknobs are among the last things to go into a new or newly remodeled home, but sometimes it's important to keep doors closed for painting, to reduce dust, or to signal that a room is complete and there's no reason to go in. You could install a salvaged knob and swap it out later, but it's a lot easier to use a *Blue Thing*. This temporary knob is adjustable for both 1³/₈-inch and 1³/₄-inch backsets, and it installs without tools. You can find it on the company website for \$2 each.

Perfect Products, 877/366-7728, www.doorsaver.com.



Better Bolt

A deadbolt is a tenet of home security, but how much does it really help when faced with a flat bar? If your customer is looking for something better, you could suggest the *MacLock Blade Locking System*. The 28-inch sliding lock replaces the bolt, and it works with products from most manufacturers, including Baldwin, Schlage, Weiser, Yale and Kwikset. To make cutting the large slot in the door edge easier, the manufacturer offers a router template, bushings, and a 5/16x4-inch router bit. The maker claims that MacLock is six times stronger than a standard deadbolt and that the steel housing reinforces the upper part of the door. Buying three at \$117 each gets you the template and router bit for free.

MacLock, 866/297-7233, www.maclock.com.



Bookcase Bifold

You wouldn't think that a bookcase and an interior door have much in common until you see the *SpaceXDoor*. This innovative product combines the two in a cool-looking, space-saving bifold, making what seems like the perfect closet door for home offices and bedrooms. The 8-inch-deep bookcase is available in several hardwood veneers and in MDF. According to the maker, the smooth-acting hardware prevents books and knickknacks from taking a tumble. Prices start at \$1,300.

SpaceXDoors, 800/262-9464, www.spacexdoors.com.



High-Style Drop Ceiling

Drop ceilings are a great option for basement or commercial spaces because the panels allow access to mechanical systems and easy upgrades of communication and data cabling. The only problem is a look that's strikingly reminiscent of your grade school classroom ceiling. If you're afraid your customers will send you to the dunce corner for even suggesting one, you might show them the *Techstyle* ceiling from Hunter Douglas. It has a clean monolithic appearance and installs from the bottom instead of the top, providing more ceiling height and even easier access to mechanicals. Prices start at about \$4 per square foot.

Hunter Douglas, 866/556-1235, www.hunterdouglasceilings.com.



Rustic Rail

Lodge-style homes have a character that make spindle balustrades look a little out of place. If building a more appropriately styled railing with twigs and a drawknife isn't your idea of fine carpentry, you could suggest *Balcony and Stair Panels* from J. Dubs. The heavy-gauge plasma-cut steel plates can be powder coated in four colors in standard or custom designs. You could also use them in more-modern spaces, opting for geometric patterns instead of wildlife. They're available in heights from 2 feet to 4 feet, and, according to the manufacturer, most designs pass the 4-inch spacing rule. Prices start at \$40 per foot.

J. Dubs, 800/622-9015, www.jdubs.com.



Leak-Detector Connector

A broken appliance or supply line can fill a home with gas in a hurry, and the effects can be devastating. The *Safety+Plus* gas connector includes a magnetic valve that shuts off the flow of gas to an offending appliance during a major leak. Other gas appliances are unaffected, and once the leak is repaired, the valve automatically resets without intervention. The flexible connectors also have a powder-coated finish and can be installed in both horizontal and vertical applications. Retail prices start at \$32.

Brass Craft, 248/305-6000, www.brasscraft.com.



Space-Saving Hi-Flow Flue

Masonry and B-vent chimneys are expensive to install, take up a lot of space, and require the efforts of three or four different trades. Power-venting systems replace the chimney with a fan-driven assembly that sends exhaust gasses through an exterior wall. The *SideShot 2* from Tjernlund Products is the first zero-clearance power venter — you can put it tight to framing members without risking a fire. It also has a self-cleaning impeller that resists soot buildup, an indoor draft adjustment, and a high-velocity design that prevents discolored siding. The SideShot 2 is compatible with oil-fired boilers and furnaces from 70,000 to 168,000 Btus, atmospherically vented gas boilers and furnaces from 40,000 to 125,000 Btus, and power-assisted gas boilers and furnaces from 40,000 to 150,000 Btus. It sells for about \$500.

Tjernlund Products, 800/255-4208, www.tjernlund.com.



Captivating Stapler

It's no surprise that cap nails hold building paper and house-wrap better than staples, but driving them by hand is slow and the big head means they almost always hit the ground with the foot-poking, tire-popping side facing up. A new cap stapler from Bostitch might be an improvement. Unlike cap nailers that use coils of caps, the *SB150SLBC-1* uses strips, which take up less room in your toolbelt and hold together better. The staples also have a wider crown to better resist puncturing the cap. The nailer sells for \$249.

Stanley Bostitch, 800/556-6696, www.bostitch.com.



Rock On!

If you're hoping to rally the troops for a full day of hard work, you could show up with a Bosch *PowerBox Jobsite Radio*. It provides four GFCI-protected outlets instead of just occupying one in the wall. It includes a digital tuner with 10 AM and 20 FM presets, an MP3 jack, a 12-volt DC outlet, and a charger for Bosch cordless tools. An aluminum roll cage provides protection, and when you can't plug in, it runs on any Bosch battery pack from 12 to 24 volts. With a CD player, it sells for \$179; the radio-only version is \$149.

Bosch, 877/267-2499, www.boschtools.com.



Wrench-Free Sidewinder

It's hard enough keeping track of your circular saw, but holding on to those skinny blade wrenches is even tougher. The new *Mag Series Circular Saws* from Porter-Cable have a tool-less blade-changing system that eliminates the quest for the elusive blade wrench. The maker claims the system is faster and holds as well or better than wrench-tightened bolts. The new saws also have a cool directional dust port and a lightweight housing, which the manufacturer claims is lighter and more durable than its predecessors. It's available in both left- and right-handed versions with prices starting at \$130.

Porter-Cable, 800/487-8665, www.porter-cable.com.

