Letters

It's Not the Stucco

To the Editor:

I am so pleased that *JLC* was able to crack open the veil of the stucco industry's secrecy ("Minnesota Building Official Makes Waves With Stucco Warning," *In the News*, 10/03). Now we don't have to hide in dark alleyways and underground bunkers any longer. The vast conspiracy has been ripped open. It's true, it's all about workmanship. Early in 1987 we all got together and decided we would have a massive paradigm shift in the way we completed our most basic of tasks. In effect, we instructed everyone involved in the stucco business to do everything bassackwards, just to see if we could get away with it.

Now that I have your attention, don't you find it surprising that these issues seem to correlate with a time in our history when we were trying to make our homes more energy efficient? Nobody (at least here in Minnesota) can provide a reasonable explanation as to why we have to put plastic sheeting on the inside of our framing, yet we are required to do it. Our exterior walls are now constructed with 2x6s instead of 2x4s, just to handle the extra insulation we are required to put in them. And, is it any coincidence that at the same time we were making our homes exceedingly more complex, we found OSB and also made our windows more energy efficient and easier to mount into rough openings with the introduction of nailing flanges.

For our part, the Minnesota Lath and Plaster Bureau has been perhaps more progressive than most in defining criteria for properly tying in flashing issues with the installation of the weather-resistive barrier. Not surprisingly, a sales rep for a large window manufacturer in the area stops by our office once in a while to pick up our instruction guide for installing windows. Go figure, stucco guys telling window guys how to put in windows!

If there was a paradigm shift in workmanship, it seems to be particularly apropos as it applies to window installation. Where in the evolution of construction was it decided that it would be better to flash a window behind the exterior cladding instead of over it? The purpose of flashing after all is to keep water out at its most vulnerable spots. Instead of using all of the gaskets and goop we now employ to weep water 6 feet to 60 feet from where it is getting in, wouldn't it make better sense to make a window that flashes over the cladding rather than behind it?

The window manufacturers have been marvelous in making new energy-efficient window products, but they have done us no favors in making them easier to mount into a rough opening. The simple fact is that there is still a lot of confusion about proper installation, and the majority of the window manufacturers continue to be evasive if not apathetic on the issue.

Portland cement plaster (a.k.a. stucco) has been mixed and installed in essentially the same manner for over 100 years. It is as natural a building product as stone, wood, and brick. When we start to question the viability of such a product, it is time to apply the brakes and take an informed look at the direction our building practices are taking us.

Steven Pedracine, CSI, CDT
Executive Director
Minnesota Lath and Plaster Bureau

Lopsided Reporting

To the Editor:

I can't recall ever having seen such a one-sided and thoroughly slanted hit piece done by a respected trade journal as your article "Bucking Trend, California Picks NFPA Building Code" (*In the News*, 10/03). The only views presented to your audience in the article were those of the relentless ICC propaganda machine.

What kind of balanced news reporting was that? Perhaps some insight from NFPA or IAPMO would have presented a more encompassing article, one that delved into the real problems with the ICC codes — why their full adoption has been limited to a small handful of the 50 states, or what instigated the disintegration of a long-standing amicable relationship among the organizations involved.

Next time an ICC representative knocks on your door, please be a little more skeptical, okay?

Howard T. Stidham
Bakersfield, Calif.

Step in the Right Direction

To the Editor:

I appreciated the article "Doing Vinyl Right" (11/03). The reason I hesitate to specify vinyl is the generally poor detailing and poor workmanship. It seems everyone is a "certified installer," but finding a truly qualified installer is rare.

Two items in the trim section of the article show, however, that there is still a way to go to match the crisp appearance of wood. A true rosette (Figure 1) is square and would not have a little corner nibbled out of it. Also, anything that is done to get rid of the J-strip is great, but the caulk joint shown in the installed photo in Figure 2 would be rejected by any quality installer. Again, thank you for the step in the right direction.

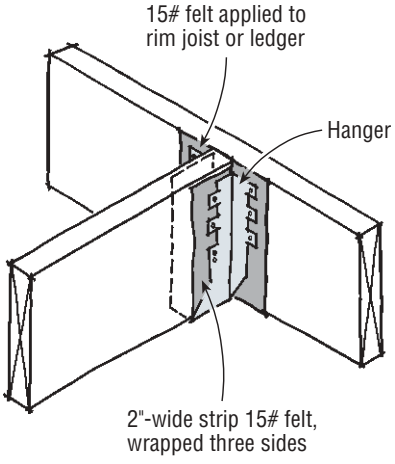
Robert P. Mocarsky
Simsbury, Conn.

Letters

Preventing Hanger Corrosion

To the Editor:

Your news item "New Wood Treatments May Be More Corrosive" (*In the News*, 9/03) was right on time: I'm rebuilding a deck using ACQ framing. To combat any premature



corrosion, I isolated all metal framing connectors from the treated framing with pieces of 15# felt. Each joist hanger needed two pieces, one applied to the ledger board or rim joist, and one strip a few inches wide wrapped around the three sides of the joist resting in the hanger.

This probably added an hour or two to the labor of the deck, but I believe it was time well spent and cheap insurance against future problems.

Mike Nolin
Brewster, Mass.

Good idea. According to metal connector manufacturers, stainless-steel hardware and fasteners (Types 304 and 316) offer the best protection with ACQ and Copper Azole lumber. G185 galvanized hardware (1.85 ounces of zinc per square foot), such as Simpson's Z-MAX or USP's Triple Zinc is also recommended. At a minimum, use hot-dipped galvanized hardware and fasteners, but don't mix stainless fasteners with galvanized hardware (or vice versa).

— The Editor

Privacy Protection for Mac

To the Editor:

I read with interest your article concerning privacy invasion problems and identity theft on the Internet (*Computers*, 11/03). While I realize most people use PCs, many of us use Macs because they are generally better at handling graphics. I looked up the web addresses you provided (ZoneAlarm, Grisoft, Lavasoft), and not one of them supports Macintosh. I wondered if you knew of anyone who might offer similar services for Apple products?

William Reimann
via e-mail

Computers *columnist Joe Stoddard responds: Thank you for the question. We use Macs in the publishing world as well, but unfortunately there isn't a lot of construction software available for the platform, so I seldom cover it in my column.*

Many of the security problems PC users face are a direct result of vulnerabilities in either the Windows operating system or various other Microsoft programming environments — Visual Basic, for example. Since these are specific to PCs, you have a lot less to worry about as a Mac user. That doesn't mean you're completely immune to problems, but I don't know of any "free" Mac equivalents to the products I listed in the article. The ones I've come across are hopelessly outdated or just not effective enough to warrant a mention.

There's a pretty good list of commercial utilities for the Mac platform at www.macreviewzone.com/html/reviews/magazine/software/virus_and_security.php. Best of luck.

Flashing the Tops of Deck Joists

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the article on deck ledgers and found all the details interesting. However, I noticed there is no allowance for flashing for the tops of the joists. We use a self-sticking bituminous membrane on top of all horizontal surfaces, because it allows the nail or screw to self-seal, preventing water from entering and rotting the tops of these joists. Any reason this was left out?

Mark Labourdette, CR
Golden Gate Home Repair
Novato, Calif.

You make a good point. Using a self-sealing flashing membrane on top of the joists sounds like a good idea, especially if you're using redwood or cedar joists, which are common in the West. The assumption in the article was that all the deck framing would be pressure treated, which is standard construction in the eastern U.S. We should have labeled the joists in our drawing accordingly. Thanks for the comment.

—The Editor

KEEP 'EM COMING!

Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *JLC*, 186 Allen Brook Ln., Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com.