

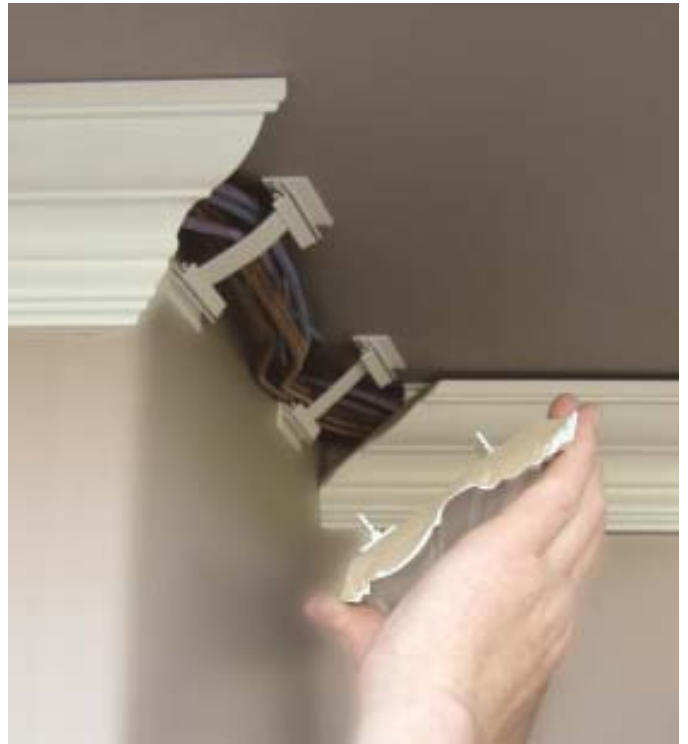
Products

by Patrick McCombe

Crown-Molding Raceway

It's tough to know what future technology will bring, but you can at least make sure your customer's home is ready for future wiring upgrades. *WireTracks CM* is a plastic channel that works in conjunction with conventional crown molding to provide a great space for running communication and other low-voltage cable. The channel includes brackets that screw to the back side of the crown, so you can remove the molding from the wall when it's time for adding wires. According to the manufacturer, the product works with any common spring angle and crowns as small as 3 inches wide. The company also makes a similar product for baseboard. Adding *WireTracks CM* to a 12x12-foot room should run about \$70, not including the crown.

WireTracks, 888/886-9473, www.wiretracks.com.



Window Dressing

Protecting glass and windows during construction should be easier with a new protective coating from Cortec. Sprayed, brushed, or rolled onto windows and other non-porous surfaces, *MCI Peel-Off Coating* creates a film to prevent scratches, nicks, and overspray. According to the maker, the VOC-compliant clear film allows inspection of the surface and peels off in large sheets at the end of the job without leaving a residue. A five-gallon pail sells for \$296.

Cortec, 800/426-7832, www.cortecmci.com.



Plan Protector

Keeping construction drawings and other important documents free from spilled coffee, mud, and weather is a constant battle. But clear protective sleeves from Easi File can help. Made from 4-mil plastic, *Pro-One transparent envelopes* will hold a single sheet or a "whole set of plans." Not only will your plans still be readable at the end of the job, you'll look more professional to your clients than the dog-eared competition. Ten-packs of the 24x36-inch size (part number EFB 24/38) sell for \$34. Ten-packs of the 30x42-inch size (part number EFB 34/44) sell for \$49.

Easi File, 800/800-5563, www.easifileusa.com.

GLUES & ADHESIVES

Miracle Worker. When you think all hope is lost and replacement is the only option for your broken item, you might try *J-B Weld*. The two-part epoxy has the consistency of putty and is legendary for fixing things that are supposedly unfixable. I know an innkeeper who used it for repairing his commercial dishwasher. The vintage machine's washer arm had broken in half and replacement parts were unavailable. While his original intent was a temporary fix, the adhesive is still working three years later. It's available in most hardware and auto parts stores and sells for about \$4.

J-B Weld, 800/529-3530. www.jbweld.net.



Bottom Feeder. Struggling to get the last inch of yellow glue out of a typical drippy glue bottle is something most carpenters and cabinetmakers would happily give up. If you're among them, you might check out the *Glü-Bot*. The plastic bottle comes in 4- and 16-ounce sizes and features a unique nozzle that dispenses glue from the bottom of the bottle instead of the top. According to the manufacturer, the design makes glue application easier and prevents clogged nozzles. Additional features include a widemouthed lid for easier refills and two different tips. The large size sells for \$6, and the small size sells for \$4.

FastCap, 888/443-3748, www.fastcap.com.



Quick Stick. Besides death and taxes, one of the other certainties of life is that glues need time to dry. You'll probably want to put off the first two as long as possible, but a quicker bond when installing trim is often an advantage. FastCap's *2P-10 adhesive system* includes an activator that makes nearly instant bonds on trim and other porous materials. What's cool about this product compared with others like it: It's available in thick or gel consistencies that make application easier when you're working on vertical or overhead surfaces. A starter kit that includes both medium and thick glue formulas, an activator, and a debonder sells for \$30.

FastCap, 888/443-3748, www.fastcap.com.

GLUES & ADHESIVES

Safer Contact Cement. Flammable vapors associated with traditional formulations of contact cement are not only bad for your health, they're extremely dangerous around pilot lights and other open flames. Unfortunately, safer substitutes haven't received a great deal of professional acceptance because of sacrifices in performance. But according to the maker, water-based *Titebond Neoprene Plus contact cement* performs as well as solvent-based contact cement without the toxicity or flammability problems. It sells for about \$15 per quart.

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



Clean-Air Construction Adhesive. Polyurethane wood glue and sealants have revolutionized residential construction because of their tenacious hold and good flexibility. These same qualities should make *Chem-Calk* an excellent construction adhesive. According to the maker, the high-solids adhesive works in temperatures down to 10°F and adheres to wet and frozen lumber. In addition, it's California VOC compliant. I was quoted \$5.95 for a 29-ounce tube by a stocking dealer in Western Pennsylvania.

Bostik Findley, 888/603-8558, www.bostikfindleyus.com.



Roof Glue. Replacing or reinstalling a concrete or clay roof tile doesn't have to be a big deal. *RT-600 adhesive* from OSI attaches tiles to both wood and mortar substrates, and in many cases you won't have to remove adjacent tiles. According to the manufacturer, the gun-dispensed adhesive satisfies building-code uplift requirements when installed on roofs lower than 55 feet above grade. A 10-ounce tube sells for about \$2.50.

OSI Sealants, 888/445-0208, www.osiproseries.com.

BASEMENT FINISHING

Column Cover-up. Effectively disguising a basement lally column is one of those perennial remodeling problems. There are perhaps hundreds of ways to hide an ugly column, but if you're looking for a fast and easy method, you should check out the *Pole-Wrap*. The product — made from 1/2-inch-thick oak strips and a flexible backing — wraps around the pole and attaches with construction adhesive. The material comes in 12- and 16-inch by 8-foot strips and 4- by 8-foot sheets. A 12-inch by 8-foot Pole-Wrap will cover a 3 1/2-inch lally column and sells for about \$80.

Pole-Wrap, 800/241-7653, www.polewrap.com.



Crash Protection. You can disguise a lally column with decorative wood or drywall, but even the best-looking lally column won't prevent injuries when the kids run into it. If you're improving a basement play space, you might consider installing the *Lolly Wrap*.

The padded cover uses two layers of cushioning nylon bubble wrap, protected by a washable plastic outer layer. The kit will cover one 8-foot column up to 5 inches in diameter, and the manufacturer claims it can be installed in five minutes. You can also use the Lolly Wrap in garages, on basketball hoops, and on swing sets. It sells for \$40.

Lolly Wrap, 888/565-5997, www.lollywrap.com.



Pop-Top Cover. Window wells are often the only way of getting a little natural light and ventilation into an otherwise dark basement, but uncovered window wells can become a handy receptacle for leaves, toys, and roof water. If you don't want a plastic bubble from the home center (who does?), you could check out the *Polycarbonate Window Well Covers* from Lustercraft. Offered in 12 standard sizes, the covers feature a 3/12 roof pitch and a rust-proof aluminum frame. Egress versions can be equipped with optional aluminum ladders and feature interior locks and prop rods. A 34x44-inch egress version sells for \$438 on the company website. Custom sizes are also available.

Lustercraft, 800/362-2492, www.lustercraft.com.



BASEMENT FINISHING

Hardwood Column Cover. I've seen a lot of different ways to hide or cover basement lally columns, but I think this is among the easiest and best-looking ready-made options. Pacific Columns' *Lally Column Covers* use biscuits for easy assembly of the two halves and include trim for the top and bottom. Spacers included with the kit make a tight fit on both 3- and 4-inch columns, and the manufacturer even provides zip ties for clamping the two pieces together while the glue dries. Stain-grade maple and cherry column covers sell for \$120 each; oak sells for \$115. Paint-grade columns sell for \$96.

Pacific Columns, 800/294-1098, www.architecturaldepot.com.



Appealing Ceiling. Drop ceilings are standard fare for basement living space, but an expansive grid of white tiles can look a little boring. If you or your customer is looking for something with more pizzazz, you might consider pressed tin. M-Boss makes a line of *drop-in tin ceilings* that offer the same advantages of conventional drop ceilings but without the homogeneous, institutional look. The 2x2-foot panels are meant to be painted, but the company also offers ten factory finishes from traditional "white" and "polished copper" to "sky tones" and "sage." The ceiling shown runs about \$8.50 per panel in a mill finish; the white painted version runs about \$12.50.

M-Boss, 866/886-2677, www.mbossinc.com.