Sensible Stainless

Low-profile cap nuts for structural connections

While stainless steel makes the most sense in a coastal climate for any structural connection, the price of 1/2-inch stainless bolts has skyrocketed. A 1/2- x 12-inch stainless steel bolt — a common fastener for any piling connection — today runs about $6, and rising. Enter Carriage Cap Nuts from Marsh Fasteners, which can be used with any length 1/2- and 5/8-inch-diameter threaded rod and run only about $1 apiece. Available in Type 304 or 316 stainless, and sold individually or in "Contractor Packs" with the threaded rod, flat washers, and a hex nut for the other end, the entire stainless-steel connection typically runs less than half the cost of a comparable bolt.

CARRIAGE CAP NUTS

Marsh Fasteners specializes in a wide range of stainless-steel products including nuts, bolts, screws, nails, finish nails, collated nails, U-bolts, brads, anchors, washers, hose clamps, cushion clamps, and hinges for distribution to retailers and the trades. For more information, contact Marsh Fasteners, 800-453-4642; www.marshfasteners.com.

Low-Maintenance Millwork

Replica trim in thousands of profiles

Fypon — a high-density urethane with a density equivalent to white pine — comes in 6,000 configurations of millwork, molding, columns, balusters, window and door trim, even decorative louvers and vents, making it one of the most versatile ready-to-go exterior trim alternatives. The precision-molded pieces are made by pouring liquid urethane into molds. As the compound cures, a chemical reaction occurs that causes the urethane to expand, packing it densely into the fine details of the mold. Because of this foaming reaction, urethane is sometimes referred to as "foam," but the term is misleading. Urethane is quite dense, almost like a hard rubber, with a closed-cell structure that does not reveal voids when cut. When fully cured, the molded products are removed from the forms, cleaned up, and double-coated with an ultraviolet-stable primer. The molded pieces can then be coated with a high-quality latex paint or stain. Since the material is dimensionally stable and impervious to moisture, the finish typically lasts years longer than it might on wood or even fiber cement.

FYPON

While the urethane material cuts like butter and can be easily trimmed, the chief advantage of Fypon over other nonwood exterior materials is the wide range of ready-to-use built-up profiles and patterns available. Fypon also recently introduced a closed-cell PVC trim, which the company recommends when an exterior must be crafted, rather than assembled with stock parts. Because PVC is denser than urethane, it behaves more like a hardwood. For more information, contact Fypon, 800-446-3040; www.fypon.com.

Folding Walls

Open a house to the natural world

The NanaWall is a line of elegant, engineered, opening glass wall systems that bring the outdoors in. The folding and sliding systems are available in a wide selection of glazing and frame styles. These aren't economy models, but are durable precision units that meet approved standards for air infiltration, water infiltration, and forced entry. Some systems also meet the codes for impact resistance for windborne debris regions.

NanaWall Folding Systems can open up to 36 feet of an exterior wall with a maximum of 12 panels. A range of stacking options (which define how the door panels are grouped for storage when opened), as well as inward- and outward-opening options, are available.

NANAWALL SYSTEMS

NanaWall Sliding Systems consist of individual glass panels, which slide on a single track. Each panel is supported by two carriers and is moved independently into position, locking into place with tongue-and-groove connections. Because the panels move on a single track, the units offer greater weathertightness than multitrack systems. For more information, contact Nana Wall Systems, 800-873-5673; www.nanawallsystems.com.

Aggressive Augers

Sharp cutting edge blows though staples and nails

Though no one intends to snag that nail or screw when drilling through framing, the occasional mishap is inevitable. Bosch engineered the heavy-duty cutting edge and self-feeding screw point in its Type II Power Band Ship Augers to cut right through such impediments in soft or hard wood. Low-friction black oxide coated flutes reduce chip clogging, while a hollow center provides a wide-open channel for fast chip removal. The Bosch Type II line ranges in size from 3/8 to 11/2 inches and overall lengths of 71/2, 17, and 24 inches.

Type II bits cut rougher cut than Bosch Type I Spur Auger bits, which are designed to keep all the drilling power focused to the outer cutting edge for faster, cleaner cuts. Type I bits, which are available from ?- to 11/2-inch diameters and 71/2-, 13-, and 17-inch lengths, speed drilling holes for conduit, pipe, gas lines, or piling connections. For more information, contact Bosch Power Tools, 877-267-2499; www.boschtools.com.

BOSCH TYPE II POWER BAND SHIP AND SPURAUGERS

Standby Power

Double-duty generator for backup and outdoor power

In the wake of power outages and gasoline shortages caused by major storms, a standby generator such as the Guardian Plus, which switches on immediately with loss of power, is increasingly at the top of the storm preparedness list for residents along the eastern and Gulf seaboards. For many second homes with sump pumps and water filtration systems, an automatic generator has become an essential system in the home's infrastructure. Better still, if located near the pool house or other outdoor living area, the Guardian Plus will not only provide peace of mind for homeowners but can also serve as a prewired outdoor power source. It features both an external 120-volt GFCI duplex outlet and an internal 12-volt outlet. A 12,000-watt standby unit, which runs on LP or natural gas, retails for about $2,700; a 7,000-watt Guardian Plus costs under $1,900. For more information or to locate a dealer near you, contact Generac Power Systems, 800-333-1322; www.guardiangenerators.com.

THE GENERAC GUARDIAN PLUS

Storm Shingles

Lightweight metal panels resist heavy winds

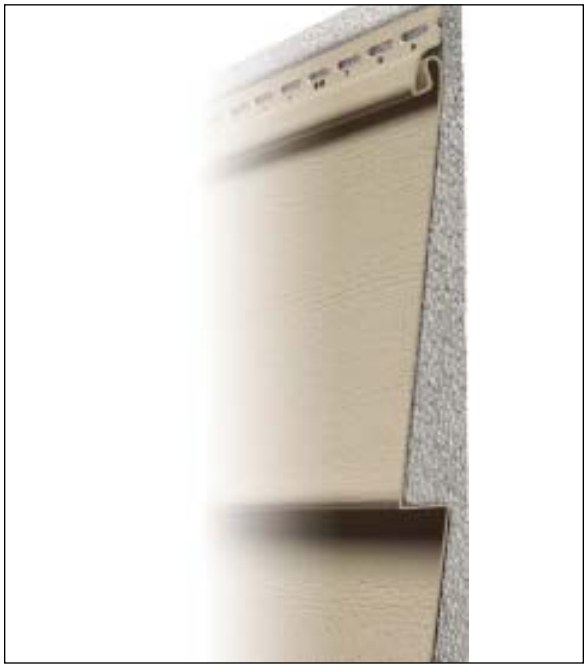
Post-storm evaluations for over a decade have reported that metal roofing tends to fare much better than many other kinds of roofing in hurricanes and tropical storms. For starters, the cleats are usually screwed to the sheathing, and the high strength-to-weight ratio of the panels means they resist uplift against the fasteners better than heavier roofing materials such as asphalt shingles and concrete tiles. Custom-Bilt Metals supplies residential metal roofing systems that are not only wind-resistant but also carry a Class A flame-spread rating. They are available in a range of coatings featuring Ultra-Cool — a reflective coating that reduces solar gain. Among the profiles available, Custom-Bilt Metals offers a range of shingle-style panels. Its Vail shingle comes in a true copper finish, while the Country Manor aluminum shake provides the warm look of wood shakes. For more information, contact Custom-Bilt Metals, 800-826-7813; www.custombiltmetals.com.

CUSTOM-BILT METALS

Stronger Siding

Improved rigidity gives vinyl a fighting chance

Vinyl siding doesn't always weather a hurricane so well. High winds tend to strip a home of its vinyl, particularly if the panels are underfastened, and most vinyl is particularly vulnerable to damage from windblown debris. CertainTeed is working to create a better vinyl with improved impact resistance with its TrueComfort siding design, which uses a foam insert to increase the panel's rigidity. According to CertainTeed, the TrueComfort design has been proven to resist impact up to five times better than traditional vinyl siding. The foam also helps level out imperfections in the wall to keep lines straight. Because the foam inserts are individual pieces, they can expand and contract with temperature changes and breathe better than fanfold foam underlayment, so the foam is unlikely to create a wrong-side vapor barrier.



CERTAINTEED TRUECOMFORT SIDING

Durable Doors

Elegant entries endure the extremes

Both the doors and frames in Jeld-Wen Premium Fiberglass Doors are designed to reduce warp, rot, cracking, and splitting, and as a result require virtually no maintenance. The door skin is made by mixing a long-fiber glass embedded in a polyurethane resin (most fiberglass resins are polyester). The mixture is injected onto a die, which is then pressed and cured to form a door skin that is dimensionally stable and dent resistant. (A similar technology is reportedly used to improve panel strength by the automotive industry, but is not used by any other door manufacturer.) In general, fiberglass is less expensive than hardwood and more expensive than steel, but in harsh climates it tends to outlast both. For coastal applications, Jeld-Wen offers a full line of impact-resistant door lights and hard-

JELD-WEN PREMIUM FIBERGLASS DOORS