

Letters

Unvented Attics Meet Codes

California seems to be one of the only states (if not the only) that has not yet adopted the International Building Code, so Quenda Behler Story's example of unvented attics in the article "Alternative Materials and Code" (*Legal*, 7/06) works in our state for now.

The story might give the impression that this is still an unproven method or is considered an "alternative design," but in fact unvented attics are now part of the IBC (R-806.4). Our company sprays closed-cell spray foam insulation in unvented ceiling assemblies almost every day, so we are constantly explaining the physics, requirements, and details involved to builders, architects, code officials, and consumers. We would like your readers to understand that while there are some careful planning details to consider beyond the code, an unvented ceiling assembly with closed-cell spray foam is not only efficient and comfortable, it is now a code-approved application.

James Morshead

American Services Co.
Fairfax, Calif.

Of Pigs and Goats

While funny, the comment in "Alternative Materials and Code" about the three little pigs running the building department is very short-sighted. Straw-bale construction has been around for hundreds of years, and some of the old buildings are still standing today. Straw bales have been proven not to actually burn; they just smolder because they are so dense. The main hazard is that during construction you have to keep the loose stuff swept up because that will burn pretty easily. Once it's in place, you're good to go.

And by the way, goats eat hay, not straw.

Paul Rockey

Lindenhurst, Ill.

Editor Wanted

Candidates should be familiar with *JLC* and have construction experience, general knowledge of building codes and business practices, skill with a camera, and the ability to write clearly and concisely. Relocation to Vermont preferred. Send cover letter, resume, and writing sample to Don Jackson, *JLC*, 186 Allen Brook Lane, Williston, VT 05495.

Curious Setup

Mike Rand's article ("Trimming a Houseful of Windows," 08/06) was full of useful tips and tricks. I was curious, however, about something I noticed in the top picture on page 76: On the side of the workbench is a length of PVC piping with a series of vertical branches with valves. Is this some sort of air-supply system?

Jay Arkuszewski

Aries Builders
Baltimore

Author Mike Rand responds: Those are valved ports for a vacuum press, which I use for laying up veneer. The ports also work as hold-downs: By removing the melamine worktop seen in the photo, I can use the vacuum to clamp material in place as I work.

Personal Approach

Don Jackson's article about New Orleans (*In the News*, 8/06) was one of the best pieces I have seen anywhere about this issue. It managed to cover a tremendous range of complex issues through personal stories. I wish there had been more.

Charlotte Wolter

Santa Monica, Calif.

Fan of SIPs

I'm a huge fan of SIP construction ("Building With Structural Insulated Panels," 8/06). It's been in use for over 40 years but is often overlooked because it costs a few dollars more. People tend to forget the energy savings, which in addition to reducing the need for oil and gas can save the homeowner hundreds every year. Some of my projects have paid for the panels in energy savings in eight years.

KEEP 'EM COMING!

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



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I agree with Gary Pugh: My projects typically run 2 percent to 6 percent more than stick framing. I feel that this is very little extra for a building that goes up faster and is stronger, quieter, and more energy-efficient.

Most building departments require an engineer to design the project if you buy panels and cut openings for windows or install beams and headers in the field. I have chosen to buy from a company whose system has a UL label and building-code approval. This eliminates the engineer on most projects. The panels are completely prebuilt and only require erection on site. There's occasionally some fitting to do, but very little. This also eliminates the need to buy specialized tools.

SIPs aren't just for residential construc-

tion — they also work well as insulated skins over steel or post-and-beam in commercial, agricultural, and industrial work.

Jim Glover

Pierre, S.D.

Safety Stories Hit Home

Thank you for "Safety Lessons" (8/06). Every morning I sleepily tell my husband as he goes out the door, "Be careful" and "Take care of your body." But nothing I can say can beat the article — and especially the pictures — in getting his attention. He groaned as he read every word. I hope it sticks.

Lisa Swanson

Washington, D.C.

A few years ago, a 2-inch, 18-gauge finish

nail rebounded and hit me square in the lens covering my right eye. If not for my glasses, there is no doubt I'd be a one-eyed carpenter today. The bottom line: Cracked, scratched, or punctured lenses can be replaced. Can your eyeball?

Patrick Couillard

Chelmsford, Mass.

While I appreciate the need to frequently remind people about job-site safety, I really did not need to see the photo associated with "Knee a Poor Substitute for Sawhorse." Keep that gore on the medical shows that I don't watch on television, not in a magazine I read over lunch break.

Steven J. Hovland

Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates
Emeryville, Calif.