

Window Seal

Polyurethane foam exerts zero pressure on jambs

For sealing windows and doors, caulk is not the answer. Caulk may be used under the nailing flange on the sides and across the head as a secondary water stop, but sealing along the bottom flange can trap moisture that leaks through the window unit. The job of air-sealing around windows and doors should be left to foam sealant instead. Sometimes called “nonexpanding foam,” the name is a misnomer: Foam sealant formulated for windows and doors still expands to fill the cavity and cut off pathways for air leakage. The trick is to formulate the foam so the expansion drops off before the foam fully cures. **Touch 'n Seal No-Warp Foam Window & Door Insulating Sealant** is a bright white, one-component polyurethane foam that reportedly drops to zero pressure after a few minutes, so there is no risk of distorting the jambs, even on lightweight vinyl or aluminum windows. For more information, contact Convenience Products, 800-325-6180; www.touch-n-seal.com.



NO-WARP FOAM WINDOW & DOOR INSULATING SEALANT

Job-Site Heat

Versatile propane heaters make winter working tolerable

Florida and the Gulf Coast can relax now that hurricane season is over, but coastal contractors from Maine to New Jersey are bracing for bitter weather. The new line of Desa propane heaters won't exactly substitute for a Florida vacation, but they might make it a bit easier to keep working through the winter. The **Pro-Tough** line of propane forced-air heaters operate 25% quieter than the typical salamander heater, says the manufacturer. Each one is equipped with a high-capacity fan to circulate directional heat and includes an adjustable-height footing to angle heat upward for specific spot heating. The heaters include a rugged roll cage and molded plastic end caps to protect them if they should ever be dropped or knocked over. This new design also allows the heaters to be ganged together and stacked vertically to create a “wall of heat” when temperatures plunge especially low. Desa heaters are available with adjustable Btu outputs from 30,000 to 55,000; 50,000 to 85,000; 75,000 to 125,000; and 125,000 to 170,000, each with a built-in thermostat. For more information, contact Desa International, www.desaint.com/indoor.htm.



DESA PRO-TOUGH HEATER

Bamboo Countertops

A new slice on butcher block

Totally Bamboo, a company that made its debut crafting bamboo cutting boards, has now unveiled a line of **solid bamboo countertops**. Available in both 1½- and 2-inch thicknesses, the countertops are constructed with cross bands of bamboo stock laminated together with a food-grade, formaldehyde-free adhesive. This construction, the maker says, will ensure that the slabs of bamboo stay flat and true, and it also produces a striking edge profile. The countertop material, which sells for \$35 per square foot, comes in four different grain patterns in 30-inch widths and 60- or 96-inch lengths. The planks come unfinished and sanded to 180 grit, ready to be spliced together and the edges routed to suit any style. For more information, contact Totally Bamboo, 818-765-9000; www.totallybamboo.com.



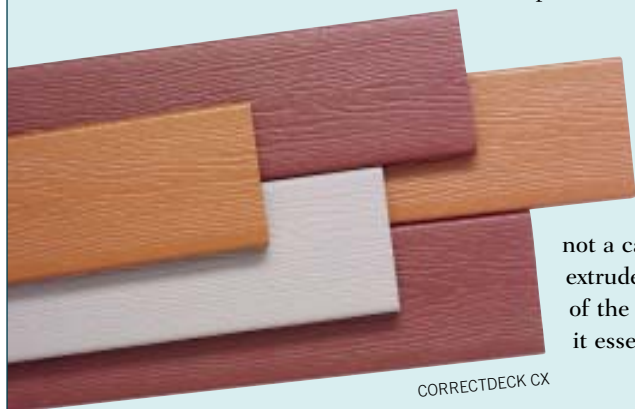
TOTALLY BAMBOO

Durable Decking

New production method yields mold- and stain-resistant decking

CorrectDeck has released a new composite decking material, dubbed **CorrectDeck CX**, that is made with an innovative coextrusion process that lays down a top layer of polypropylene, completely sealing the hardwood fibers. This top layer is not a cap stock — it is extruded with the rest of the board, making it essentially one

piece. But the top layer itself is solid plastic. Into this top layer has been added an antimicrobial called Microban (www.microban.com) that disrupts the cell functions of molds. Because the mold is unable to reproduce, it never has a chance to grow. In addition, the polypropylene top layer seals the wood fibers, protecting them from absorbing grease or food spills, making the decking stain resistant. According to the manufacturer, the material is also more fade resistant because it's typically the wood fibers in a composite that fade. For more information, contact Correct Building Products, 877-332-5877; www.correctdeck.com.



CORRECTDECK CX

New Plastic Trim

Cellular polystyrene competes with PVC

Universal Forest Products has introduced a unique trim stock made from cellular polystyrene. This is not beadboard; it's fairly dense, though lighter and a bit more rigid than cellular PVC. Like PVC trim, it can be cut, tooled, and fastened with ordinary woodworking tools, and it is completely impervious to water, mold, insects, and rot. **TechTrim** is available preprimed in a range of flat board stock, each with an embossed wood-grain texture on one side and a smooth surface on the other. It also comes in a 10-foot-long, preformed corner boards (4- or 6-inch reveals each side) that reportedly adapt to out-of-square (88- to 92-degree) corners. For more information, contact Universal Forest Products, 877-463-8379; www.techtrimproducts.com.



TECHTRIM

Safety Plugs

Redesigned earplugs offer better noise reduction

While they might not look like much, earplugs actually offer better hearing protection than most earmuffs. This is especially true of the redesigned Howard Leight **AirSoft** earplugs, which boast a noise reduction rating (NRR) of 27. (The NRR number is roughly equivalent to the expected reduction in decibels achieved by wearing a particular type of hearing protection.) This level of noise reduction is made possible by a series of noise-blocking fins surrounding an air pocket. As the air pocket compresses in the ear canal, these fins interweave to create a barrier against incoming sound waves. A fourth flange has been added to the AirSoft plugs, and the center shaft has been stiffened to make it easier to insert and remove the multiple-use plugs. For more information, contact Bacou-Dalloz Hearing Safety Group, 800-430-5490; www.hearingportal.com.



AIRSOFT

Deck Drainage

Finished ceiling beneath deck creates outdoor living space

Several finish systems designed to be installed beneath decks have come on the market in recent years. All transform the space beneath elevated decks into usable outdoor living space, but not all work in the same way. Beware of products that involve fitting a rigid panel between the deck joists. For these products to work, the framing has to be rectangular, and it has to be dead-on. Any unconventional framing (as for a curved deck) or any deviation from a standard on-center layout will make the drainage panel difficult to install. Also watch out for products that are sold in "kits" of predetermined material quantities, which can force the installer to overbuy for a single project.

One alternative that avoids these problems is the **DrySnap** system. It consists of 8-inch panels that install entirely below the upper-story deck joists, and it finishes out like beadboard ceiling. It doesn't matter how the framing above is configured as long as there's consistent support at a maximum 24 inches on-center. And DrySnap can be purchased by the linear foot in quantities to match each job. For more information, contact Amerimax Home Products; www.drysnap.com.



DRYSNAP/1ST DECK

Dramatic Door

Sliding-glass corner opens up the view

PGT recently added the **WinGuard Sliding Glass Door Series 730** to its line of impact-resistant window and doors. Available with two, three, or four tracks, this aluminum-framed corner door comes standard with galvanized corrosion-resistant hardware and fasteners (stainless steel tandem rollers and assembly screws are available as an upgrade). It is fully weather-stripped to keep out wind-driven rain. Both inside and outside corner configurations are available, as are bypass and pocket styles. While impact-resistant glass comes standard, upgrade options include insulating glass and tinted glass. For more information, contact PGT Industries, 877-550-6006; www.pgtindustries.com.



WINGUARD SERIES 730

Hollow-Point Bit

Easier drilling through glass, stone, and tile

Hitachi Power Tools announced a new line of revolutionary **diamond-grit drill bits** designed to bore through tile, marble, porcelain, granite, slate, and glass. According to the manufacturer, the new bits cut faster and last longer than standard carbide glass and tile bits. Ranging in size from $\frac{3}{16}$ to $\frac{3}{8}$ inch, they are made for the installation of myriad bathroom items, including the sink basin, cabinets, radiators, handrail, toilet bowl, paper roll holder, soap dishes, toothbrush holder, mirror, lights, curtain rail, towel hook, and shower frame. Each bit features a raised lip of diamond-grit particles sintered around a hollow barrel. The bits are designed to be started freehand by slightly angling the bit. As the hole's edge is defined, the user slowly centers the bit. The hollow barrel creates a core that helps guide the drill and reduces the chance of skating. For more information, contact Hitachi Power Tools, 800-829-4752; www.hitachipowertools.com.



HITACHI DIAMOND-GRIT DRILL BIT

High-R Insulation

Closed-cell foam for high-performance homes

Insulation works by trapping a gas, creating a series of empty pockets that don't conduct heat very well. In fiberglass batts, glass fibers create a matrix of air pockets that reduce the conduction of heat through a building assembly. But because these air pockets are not sealed, batts are vulnerable to air leaks that can blow through the fibers and rob the insulation of R-value.

Spray-applied foam insulation consists of millions of tiny air bubbles filled with a non-CFC, low-conductivity gas. These bubbles are created by injecting a blowing agent into the liquid plastic. Because the tiny bubbles are completely surrounded by an impervious polymer, they are impermeable to air (and thus to leaks). As the foam expands, it molds itself to all the surfaces in a wall or ceiling assembly, creating an effective seal to stop air movement.

According to Honeywell, a leading supplier of the **Honeywell Enovate** blowing agent used to produce a wide range of spray-applied and rigid polyurethane insulations, spray-applied closed-cell polyurethane insulation has the highest R-value (typically R-7 per inch) and is also impervious to moisture, making it a good choice in wet floodproofing applica-



HONEYWELL ENOVATE

tions (see "Low Country Rx: Wet Floodproofing," July/August 2006; www.coastalcontractor.net). Honeywell claims that once cured in stud bays, the rigid mass of insulation actually stiffens the wall assembly, making it more resistant to racking in high winds. For more information, contact Honeywell, 800-631-8138; www.honeywell.com.