

Letters

Air-Sealing Diagnostics

I just finished reading Bruce Torrey's article on sealing leaky attics (2/08), and have a question. In our area, insulation quality is historically abysmal. Are the diagnostic tools Bruce uses — the blower door and infrared camera — entirely necessary for attic sealing? Or in houses where the insulation quality is known to be poor, could builders use some generally prescriptive measures initially, then use these tools for a more nuanced assessment of the problem at a later date?

Jesse Smith
Yardley, Pa.

Bruce Torrey responds: Infrared scans completed on thousands of buildings demonstrate one consistent fact: There are no "one size fits all" solutions or strategies for buildings. Every structure has its own unique configuration of framing details, chases, and penetrations assembled by the various subs who have worked on it over the years. Missed opportunities to seal critical air-leakage paths are all too common, resulting in wasted energy and a whole range of building-performance complications that last the lifetime of the building. Going back for targeted air sealing after the attic has already been insulated is a backward, labor-intensive approach. I always advocate the preemptive diagnostics discussed in the article as part of any building-improvement plan.

A Modest Proposal

In the mist of our current economic slowdown, I find it alarming that Arizona and Tennessee would decide to revoke the business licenses of companies that employ undocumented workers (*In the News*, 2/08). Illegal immigration is a major problem in need of a comprehensive federal solution, but putting American companies out of business is counterproductive. Instead, give small contractors a viable option. In the short term — until real reform is in place — the federal government should

allow documented illegal immigrants, and allow business owners to register employees with the Social Security office. If the workers are in the country illegally, simply put an asterisk in front of their Social Security number so they can be identified as illegal but still put on the payroll. Then taxes can be withheld. If they commit no other crimes and pay their taxes, they can continue to work and there'd be no reason to arrest and deport them — something the country doesn't have the resources or stomach to do anyway. Meanwhile, you could ratchet up the penalties on contractors who fail to comply, since the simple registration process would leave them no excuse.

While neither ideal nor permanent, this solution would be relatively easy to implement — and far better than running people out of business.

Steve Ryan
Ringwood, N.J.

All Accidents Are Preventable

Chance Girdley's comments about how it used to be in the old days (*Letters*, 2/08) are silly when you're sitting across from a woman who lost her husband to a construction accident. The problem is that our industry accepts the term "accident," implying there is no way to prevent the event in the first place and that danger is the cost of doing business. The truth is that there are no accidents on a construction site that can't be prevented by good management.

Jeffrey Fagan
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Still Walking the Plates

I agree with Chance Girdley on this one (*Letters*, 2/08). At 67 years old I still walk the plates, though a little slower now. The most important thing the boss can do to protect workers from death and injury is make sure that everyone is able to stay focused on the job and on what's going on around them. No amount of safety regulations and gear will replace that. Construction sites are full of hazards, but paying attention will prevent injury.

Conrad vonBlankenburg
Torrance, Calif.

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.

