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JLC's

Letters

A Closer Look at Glues

To the Editor:

I am writing to comment on the feature "Q&A: Job-Site Glues," which appeared in your October 2000 issue and to which I contributed. While I found this feature to be well presented and highly informative, I must also report that several of the responses conflict with the facts, as we understand them here at Franklin International.

The first such response was given in answer to a two-part question: "Can silicone caulk be used as an exterior glue? How does it compare in strength to Titebond II or a polyurethane glue?" While it is certainly true that silicone caulk can be used as an exterior glue, the fact that caulks are designed to stretch means that caulks in general exhibit much less strength than glues. They stretch rather than resist movement.

The author of the response goes on, however, and attempts to address the issue of service life of a number of exterior glues, and it is this portion of the response that is most in question. In particular, he states that "Most one-part cross linking adhesives (for example, Titebond II) have a limited ability to withstand the extremes encountered in an exterior environment." And that "Most will show signs of delamination within 6 to 12 months." For the record, Titebond II has been on the market for more than nine years, and has been recommended and used for a variety of outdoor applications with no evidence that any well-made bonds have delaminated or otherwise failed. While the author of this response may have intended to convey that this type of product is not appropriate for underwater use (and we would agree), his comments instead suggested that products such as Titebond II should not be used outdoors. In that regard, our years of history and many thousands of satisfied long-term users would clearly disagree.

The second response that raised concerns was given in answer to the question "Are there differences in performance between water-borne and solvent-borne construction adhesives?" While the portion of the answer regarding "wet out" was right on the money, two other portions of that answer are worthy of comment. First, the author states, "solvent-based products tend to have a much faster curing rate." The opposite is, in fact, true. The drying rate of water-borne adhesives is indeed more affected by high moisture or cold temperatures than that of solvent-borne adhesives, but in moderate conditions, water-borne adhesives approach full strength a day or two after they are applied. In comparison, even in the best of conditions, solvent-borne products routinely take in excess of a week to reach full strength. The second issue of concern is the statement that "most water-borne construction adhesives contain at least some percentage of solvent, which can often aid in their wetting ability." While including a small amount of solvent in a water-borne construction adhesive is one way to improve its wetting, that approach was much more common in the water-borne construction adhesives marketed years ago than in those being sold today. In fact, the majority of our competitors now market water-borne construction adhesives as being solvent-free.

Mark A. Roberts, technical specialist
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Glass Block: Handle with Care

To the Editor:

The article "Glass Block Tips & Tricks" (11/00) provides valuable hands-on insight from the installer's viewpoint. However, the author's suggestions that "you can really beat on the block until the mortar has set up," and that you may do so for up to five hours after laying the block are counter to the strict specifications provided by most glass block manufacturers. Pittsburgh Corning, for instance, prohibits any tapping, realignment, or other movement of the block after initial placement. The reason for this restriction is that any movement of the unit after placement is likely to significantly impair the fragile bond between the nonporous unit and the mortar.

Carl Mezoff, architect
Stamford, Conn.

OSB-EIFS Failures Questioned

To the Editor:

Your *Notebook* story "OSB Swells Unendingly, Researchers Find" (10/00) grossly misrepresents the conclusions of the researchers at the National Research Council Canada, whom you cited. The article claims that one of the researchers, Mostafa Nofal, "speculates that OSB's impermeability and apparent attractiveness to mold may be a factor in building envelope failures associated with EIFS" (Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems).

Based on conversations we have had with Dr. Nofal, that is not their view at all. And for good reason. As they have written elsewhere, "The experiments simulated the behavior of OSB under certain worst-case conditions and do not represent the results of a well-designed, well-built, and defect-free building envelope component." They have also written "…the damage (to sheathing) has nothing to do with the material but is a consequence of unintentional or overlooked defects in design or construction." And they have further agreed that "the larger and more relevant issue is how best to prevent moisture into wall and roof assemblies in the first place" (*Professional Roofing,* 9/00).

In short, both plywood and OSB sheathing perform admirably if properly applied and protected; both will fail if not. This is why, as we would remind readers with an interest in stucco or EIFS, the APA recommends the following: "If there is a risk of sustained panel moisture content at excessive levels, panels should be pressure-preservative treated … in accordance with AWPA Standard C-9 for above ground contact. The same is true for wood framing members used in the wall system" *(APA Technical Bulletin: Use of Structural Panels in Stucco and EIFS Wall Systems,* 1996).

Steve Zylkowski, APA director
Tacoma, Wash.

Heat-Activated Tape Clarification

To the Editor:

In "Fine-Tuning Forced-Air Heat" (12/00), Figure 6 is referenced as "a UL-181 heat-activated tape, like Ideal Tape #490." The tape shown in Figure 6 is Fortifiber's Thermlock Tape. Fortifiber Corporation, in collaboration with Johns Manville, pioneered heat-activated fiberglass duct tape; the Thermlock brand is a registered trademark of Fortifiber Corporation.

Carl Thoms, president
Fortifiber Corporation

Our caption on page 33 and our text on page 32 were both accurate. However, the brand of tape shown in Figure 6 is, indeed, Thermlock. We didn't find Thermlock listed on the Fortifiber website (www.fortifiber.com), and our author wasn't sure which brand he had used. Our apologies for this omission.

– The Editors

KEEP 'EM COMING! Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to *JLC*, 186 Allen Brook Ln., Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to *jlc@bginet.com.*