

PRODUCTS

Steel Framing

LiteSteel promotes strength, ease of use

by Scott Gibson

LiteSteel Technologies says its cold-formed, galvanized steel beams are a lighter, cost-effective alternative to wood glulams.

The company's beams can span longer distances than conventional framing material — reducing the number of footings required — and are ideal when a concrete deck will be poured, according to LiteSteel. The product's high fire resistance can also be an advantage, especially in urban areas, since steel-framed decks can be closer to each other than wood-framed ones and still meet fire codes.

Depending on beam depth — which ranges from about 8 inches to nearly 14 inches — and metal thickness, the beams weigh from about 3½ pounds per foot to 13 pounds per foot; on average, that's 40 percent lighter than hot-rolled steel or engineered wood equivalents, the company says. Beams come in lengths up to 40 feet.

Beams are made with a G-60 hot-dipped galvanized surface. For "prolonged outdoor use," the company recommends beams be primed and painted.

All that's needed to cut the beams is a standard circular saw fitted with a metal-cutting blade. They can be assem-



bled with self-tapping screws or ½-inch bolts, or they can be welded.

Retail prices range from \$5.75 to \$20.20 per foot, depending on beam size, metal thickness, and geographic location. A price list is posted on the company's website, along with span tables comparing the steel beams to wood and engineered-wood alternatives.

LiteSteel is among several companies promoting the use of steel framing for decks. Trex and EvolutionDeck are marketing similar products, claiming steel won't warp, twist, or rot and should last longer than wood.

Scott Gibson is a writer in East Waterboro, Maine.

■ **LiteSteel Technologies**, 877/285-2607, litesteelbeam.com.

Waterproof Membrane

Prevents corrosion of metal connectors

MFM Building Products' DeckWrap is a self-adhering, waterproof membrane that can be used to isolate treated lumber from metal connectors and keep water out of areas where it would promote rot.

MFM says the asphalt adhesive, which is protected by a durable film, bonds aggressively to wood and seals around nails, screws, and other fasteners.

DeckWrap is 40 mils thick and is available in 25-foot-long rolls 3 inches, 6 inches, and 12 inches wide. Like similar products, it's cut with a utility knife.

The company didn't release a price list but says a 12-inch



roll sells for between \$22 and \$25 through some of its distributors. — S.G.

■ **MFM Building Products Corp.**, 800/882-7663, deckwrap.com.

Trex Expands Lineup

Enhance decking offers a middle price-point

A new line of capstock decking, which falls midway in price between two existing products, Accents and Transcend, gives Trex what it's calling a "good, better, best decking lineup."

Like Transcend, Enhance is a wood-plastic composite wrapped on three sides with a shell that improves resistance to stains, fading, mold, harsh weather, and heavy foot traffic. Enhance decking can be cleaned up with soap and water and comes with a 20-year warranty. (Accents decking carries no guarantee against fading or stains, while Transcend has a 25-year warranty.)

Enhance, slated to be released in time for the 2012 building season, comes in two colors: a deep charcoal gray called clam shell and a honey-brown color Trex calls beach dune.

Deck boards are offered in both square and grooved profiles and measure 1 inch thick by 5½ inches wide. Matching fascia in 1x8 and 1x12 sizes will be available.



Enhance is made of 95 percent recycled materials, the company says. It will retail for about \$3 a lineal foot. — S.G.

■ **Trex Co.**, 800/289-8739, trex.com.

Structural Screws

Alternatives to through-bolts and lags

Manufactured from heat-treated carbon steel, both versions of a new Strong-Drive screw from Simpson Strong-Tie are designed to replace through-bolts and lag screws in exterior structural wood connections. A "double-barrier coating" protects the screws from corrosion caused by chemicals in pressure-treated wood.

The Strong-Drive SDWS Ledger Screw, with a ¾-inch-diameter head and a shank of 0.220 inch, comes in lengths of 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 10 inches. Screws have a T-40 drive and a cut point design that eliminates the need for pre-drilling in most applications. Simpson says the screws are best installed with a ½-inch drill running at a low speed.

If you prefer hex-head fasteners, try the SDWH. With a 0.64-inch-diameter head and a 0.195-inch-diameter shank, the SDWH comes in lengths of 3, 4, 6, 8, and 10 inches. It



takes a 5/16-inch hex driver, but sports the same tip design as the SDWS to eliminate the need for pre-drilling.

Pricing wasn't announced. — S.G.

■ **Simpson Strong-Tie**, 800/999-5099, strongtie.com. ♦