CUTTING WITH DIABLO 10 ¼-INCH BLADE ("POWER UP: 10 ¼-INCH WORMDRIVE," APR/15)

Clayton DeKorne, editor of *JLC*: In the April 2015 issue, Sim Ayers reviewed the Skil Sawsquatch 10 ¼-inch wormdrive and reported he was not happy with the Diablo thin-kerf blade that came with the saw. Diablo Tools took these comments seriously, and in early May arranged to visit Sim on the jobsite. However, during that visit Sim was unable to re-create the problems he initially observed, and he has since reported that he's used several Diablo blades on the Sawsquatch that performed perfectly.

According to Russell Kohl, president and CEO of Freud America, when using a thin-kerf blade you need to let the saw do the work. Yes, a thin-kerf blade can be made to fail. There are plenty of framing applications, explained Kohl, in which the larger-diameter blade can flex if it's overdriven. As the blade flexes, the increased friction generates heat, which can intensify the distortion. In some applications, like long rips or steep bevel cuts, it's especially important to go easy.

"A thinner blade is taking out less wood, so you can drive it faster. But handling that speed takes a new touch," Kohl says. He compares using thin-kerf blades to the adaptations needed when cordless tools first came on the market. Cordless-drill users learned that they couldn't lean so heavily into the tool. If they did, they would bog the motor down and drain the battery quicker. If they lightened up a little, they got better runtimes.

This "new touch" is not just about how aggressively you lean into the saw. There's also a finesse. Kohl referred to the "S"—the movements a saw user makes to correct a cut and hold to a line. The Diablo blade that's currently supplied with each Sawsquatch cuts a 1.7-mm kerf. That's the thickness of the carbide teeth. The plate is 1.0 mm thick. This leaves just 0.35 mm (350 micrometers) on each side in which to correct course without deflecting the blade. It's not a lot. You have to be gentle with the corrections. If you overtwist, as if skiing a tight slalom, you're going to flex the blade. A thin-kerf blade is more like giant slalom—the "S" is a little longer, a little gentler. But if you do it right, the blade runs faster and stays true.

Diablo Tools is working on a thicker-kerf 10 ¼-inch blade for the Sawsquatch. "We know some people are just going to prefer a thicker blade," says Kohl. "Others will prefer the thin-kerf. Eventually, I think they'll learn to love the thinner kerf, but we'll let the market decide."

"SEALING A SOUTH CAROLINA CRAWLSPACE," BY TED CUSHMAN (MAY/14)

Phil Stancil (online, 4/24/15): It looks like the vents [the flood vents in the sealed crawlspace] are one block above the crawlspace floor. If it does flood, what happens to the 8 inches of water that is now under the house and can't soak into the ground because of the sealed poly?

Clayton DeKorne responds: Pump it out. Those vents aren't there to provide airflow, and they're not there to provide drainage. They're special vents meant to keep the wall from collapsing. High, fast-moving water can exert an enormous lateral load on the side of the foundation wall. The vents remain closed until water pressure opens them, relieving the pressure and allowing the house to stand.

Of course, if that does happen, you have a big mess—a lot of soaked crawlspace insulation that needs to be ripped out and a lot of messy water to slop out. But that's much better than picking up pieces of the house.

"NAIL SEALABILITY TESTS," BY MATT RISINGER (ONLINE, 4/16/15)

Scott Grafer (online, 4/19/15): Since the test in question [ASTM D1970 standard for self-adhering roof membranes] places the samples [peel-and-stick and liquid-applied weather barriers] horizontally and floods the surfaces with 5 inches of water over three days, I am wondering if this is the most appropriate test for these products. Unless you are using the membrane on a flat roof, water will be shed naturally by the slope of the roof or a horizontal wall surface. I understand the findings, I'm just not sure they are real-world applicable.

FOAM CUTTING TIP ("BULLET CENTERFIRE FOAM-CUTTING SAW BLADES," MAY/14)

seaweed (online, 5/12/15): I just finished a job where I had to cut a lot of 3-inch-thick white extruded polystyrene foam. I didn't want that stuff flying around, so I looked into making a wire cutter. It was too much trouble. Finally, I just threw a cheap diamond blade onto my table saw and used that. It reduced the foam dust by 80% to 90% compared with a thin-kerf saw blade. I used a continuous rim on my table saw (what I had) and a segmented one on my 4.5-inch angle grinder for detail cutting. Both worked fine. The blade doesn't have to be that fresh. I doubt it wore the diamonds at all.