
Letters



Where's the Budweiser?

To the Editor:

I continue to enjoy your magazine and its editorial content. Compared to most of the industry press, your work is very refreshing and innovative.

The May, 1990 cover gave us all a few chuckles, so I thought I'd let you in on the joke. Our shipping person has been a roofer for a number of years and I was a general contractor for many years, so when we saw the cover, we both had the same reaction:

First, what is this guy doing with a tube of caulk on this new flashing? Caulking can't be expected to last in a roof environment beyond about three years, and its use is poor roofing practice in almost all circumstances — especially comp roofs.

Second, this "roofer" doesn't have holes in the right places. Roofers pants are worn on the side of the legs rather than the knees.

Third, how did this roofer get so dirty? (Must be a carpenter—no roofer would play in the dirt!)

Fourth, the pattern being used for the shingles (half tab offset) causes more wear than other patterns, and also is less forgiving when looking at the pattern from the ground. This is especially true in remodeling, when buildings are more likely to be out of shape, but even new construction can be affected by this.

Fifth, I have never seen a roofer use a chalk line to run courses. While this might be useful for a beginner, a pro can run straight courses all day!

My shipping person said the can of Bud is missing from the picture, but I don't think this is actually a necessary part of the job.

Keep up the good work: I often wonder how you can come up with as much good stuff as you do.

Dan D. Smith
President, The Master Builder
Sebastopol, Calif.

Beware of Unlined Flues

To the Editor:

I read with great interest John Leeke's article on chimneys (Restoration Primer, 6/90). As a home inspector who has also restored many antique homes, I have seen all those chimney problems he mentions. However, one additional problem I see especially on older houses is that some people will install wood stoves in unlined chimneys. Back then, chimney liners were either not known or, if they existed, were not used. We always advise our clients not to use an unlined chimney for a wood stove as it could cause a fire or other problems. There are several cures for this problem. You could rebuild the existing chimney or put a Metalbestos chimney through the existing one, being careful that it is done right.

Bruce Williams
Williams Inspection Co.
Hollis, N.H.

Home Inspection Not for Amateurs

To the Editor:

I am disturbed by the several companies that advertise that they can teach you to be a building inspector in five days or less. What you will become is a defendant, not an inspector.

I will not hire any inspector unless he has at least five years experience in the remodeling field. A person that builds "new construction" or has repaired his own home has no idea what it is going to look like years down the road, while a remodeler should.

The inspection industry is new, although I have been doing it for over 14 years. The best method of becoming a private building inspector is to gain the basic knowledge of a remodeler, and then go to work for someone who has paid his dues. After picking the boss'

brain for another five years, you can expect to make it on your own.

Matthew R. Feis
Garrett Inspection Service Inc.
Streamwood, Ill.

Hardboard Exaggerations

To the Editor:

In reading the article, "A Hard Look At Hardboard Siding" (6/90), there are several exaggerated statements made that distort the facts and should be explained.

Linear expansion of 2.4 inches for every 50 feet of siding might be true if all hardboard siding barely satisfied the industry maximum and was completely unrestrained, which is not the case. With hardboard, the nailing system cuts the movement nearly in half, and the five vertical joints required for a 50-foot run absorb nearly all the rest. The system performs even better if "H" molds are used.

The statement that hardboard siding needs to be painted every two or three years is another exaggeration. This might be true if someone gives the house a "fog coat" using cheap paint. The fact is that hardboard siding is an excellent substrate for paint. When application instructions are followed, applying the equivalent of two brush coats of quality paint on hardboard will outperform wood. Bill Feist, who is the paint expert at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Forest Product's Laboratory in Madison, Wisc., has confirmed this statement in several technical studies in recent years.

John R. Caplinger
Abitibi-Price
Roaring River, N.C.

Bill Feist Responds:

Our research indicates that exterior hardboard siding is usually a good wood-based substrate with regard to its paint-holding characteristics. This has been confirmed in several of our studies. We

conclude that the following are required for good performance:

- quality hardboard
- proper installation as per recommendations of the manufacturer
- timely finishing using a multi-coat system.

Basically, a properly installed, good-quality exterior hardboard siding with factory-applied primer and one topcoat of a top-quality acrylic latex house paint, which results in a total film thickness of 3 to 3.5 mils, should last four to six years depending on the degree of exposure. Applying a second topcoat should last eight to ten years. Solid color stains will not last as long as paints since they contain less solid material and produce less of a film buildup. The topcoats should be applied within two weeks of installation. If exposed longer, the hardboard siding should be reprimed.

Although we have not done any organized survey, we find most of the complaints about poor finish performance come from too little finish applied under poor conditions, poor-quality finish, poor installation procedures, and lastly poor-quality hardboard. Few of the complaints seem to be related solely to the quality of the hardboard.

Bill Feist is project leader for wood surface chemistry and protection at the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisc.



Keep 'em coming... We welcome letters, but they 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, RR#2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477.