

# LETTERS



## Fur Flies Over Felt

To the Editor:

I normally do not write letters to the editor, but the debate over the use of felt under a roof is one that never goes away. I can't help but be amused to see that the controversy is still going on, as expressed in the *On the House* column (5/93) and in the letter to the editor "Felt Not Needed" (7/93).

I can remember my first job out of college working as an architectural designer in a large lumber yard in New Hampshire, talking and working with old time Yankee carpenters and builders. Half of them said always put down felt and half said never. A few years later I was working for a custom home manufacturer. Without question, we always applied felt under our asphalt shingles, but this did not keep us from debating this hotly contested item at lunch at least once a week.

Finally my career took that fateful turn towards code enforcement and I found myself as the assistant building commissioner in Lexington, Mass. — a town full of old time Yankee carpenters and builders. I was now in the position of having to put my money where my mouth was and enforce this one way or the other. I checked the Massachusetts State Building Code, which requires felt, or that shingles be installed "as approved by the manufacturer." So I called Bird, GAF, CertainTeed, Georgia-Pacific, and as many other manufacturers as I could think of.

The information I got from all the roofing manufacturers was enough to convince me once and for all that the installation of felt is the correct approach. Virtually every manufacturer required felt or some other type of substrate with similar properties, and as one technical specialist put it: "I can't really say whether felt is necessary for the proper function of our roofing product — that has a lot to do with the quality of the installation. But I can tell you this: If there is no felt installed under our roofing the warranty is null and void." Why risk voiding your warranty over the simple installation of felt?

David E. Patnaude  
Pepperell, Mass.

## Builder Likes Floor Trusses

To the Editor:

I enjoyed Charles Wardell's article "Framing With Floor Trusses" (4/93). I recently used 21-

inch-deep, 19 $\frac{1}{2}$ -foot-long trusses in a two-story slab-on-grade house. I exploited the truss space to run all the hvac ducts, where insulation and sealing imperfections would do no harm. I disagree with him, however, about using them for custom building. Although floor trusses do somewhat limit where you can move a tub or toilet above, long ones more than compensate by freeing the floor plan below. I have two concerns that he did not address:

Long truss spans create much greater wall loadings than do solid joists, sometimes exceeding the capabilities of seemingly sturdy traditional headers or even of stud walls. I found a triple No. 2 Southern Pine 2x12 header to be marginally adequate to span an 8-foot garage door opening, for example. And stud walls may need continuous structural sheathing to avoid the danger of buckling of the studs within the plane of the wall. I recommend engineering of the walls that support them as well as the trusses themselves.

I also had a hard time keeping the framers from nailing the trusses to every partition that they crossed, despite explicit instructions. They sincerely believed that the more things they nailed together, the stronger the house. I ultimately had to pull or saw the nails that escaped their half-hearted remediation myself. I found some only by hitting one member with a hammer while feeling the other for vibrations.

Robert Leonard Nelson, Jr.  
Austin, Texas

## Praise for Good Products

To the Editor:

It is the wrong time of year for a valentine, but why not? Thank you Duracell, Lenox, and Stanley Bostich.

Duracell, because when my Maglight died of the crud, I called to inquire if they warranted flashlights against death-by-battery. They do. They sent me a UPS pickup tag for the dead Maglight. Two weeks later came a certificate good for Duracell batteries at any dealer, and a check for a new Maglight. Bravo!

Lenox, because of the superb service their Sawzall blades have given me. In a recent remodel of a log house, I was cutting new window holes. While cutting the sides of the openings I unknowingly

ripped three or four of the 8-inch spikes that hold the logs together — with the same Lenox 20580-156R blade.

Stanley Bostich, because when I sent them my N12 finish nailer to have air leakage at the trigger cured, they fixed the gun and returned it free of charge. The gun is four years old.

Without doubt you know who gets my trade: Duracell, Lenox, and Stanley Bostich.

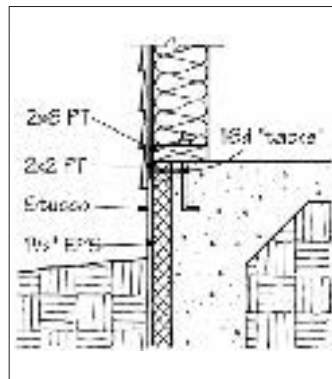
M. Felix Marti  
Marti Construction  
Ridgway, Colo.

## Poured-in-Place Foundation Insulation

To the Editor:

Here's an alternative detail for insulating a walk-out basement wall (see *On the House*, 5/93).

I've used this detail several times, and it's worked great for both stem walls and monolithic slabs. You can let the formwork run wild at the top, snap a level line on it for your finished slab elevation, and then tack on a treated 2x2 below the line. The



2x2 remains in the concrete, thanks to the nail heads from the tacking, and serves as a screed surface as well as a nailer for any door sills that might occur. Line the formwork below the 2x2 with 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch EPS, and you're ready to pour. The nooks and crannies in the EPS bond mechanically and permanently with the concrete, the forms are a breeze to strip, and you can stucco over the EPS on the outside. Also, the EPS bridges any gaps in your formwork.

Thank you for providing such an excellent forum for the booting around of ideas.

Chris Prokosch  
Atlantis Design Group  
Floyd, Va.

## Countertop Receptacles

To the Editor:

I don't usually pick nits but someone could get into a hassle due to an error in the interesting column "Tying Into Existing Utilities," by Paul Turpin (*K&B*, 4/93). L.A. electric code may be different but the NEC, Article 210-805, requires countertop receptacles to be GFCI protected when they are within 6'0" of a kitchen sink, not 60 inches as stated in the article.

Lee Edelberg  
Shelburne Falls, Mass.

## Wood Doesn't Outgas

To the Editor:

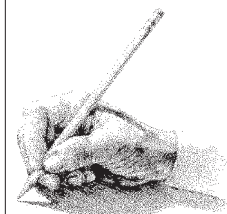
Please explain the following excerpt from the article, "Steel Studs Win Converts," by Don Best (*Eight-Penny News*, 7/93): "Since steel doesn't outgas like wood, it's ideal for occupants who are chemically sensitive."

This is one of the more preposterous statements I have heard in support of steel framing. I suppose the author is saying that wood studs give off chemical fumes... This would be a puzzling argument, because the only fumes or "outgas" from wood would be water vapor.

Glenn A. Wilson  
Manager, Technical Services  
Hoover Treated Wood Products  
Thomson, Ga.

Don Best responds:

The comment was not intended to imply that wood outgasses dangerous chemicals and fumes. It was included in response to statements from builders that some chemically sensitive homeowners (representing a tiny portion of the population) have reported allergic reactions to the resins in framing lumber and the glues used in engineered lumber products.



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.