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# Letters

## In Defense of Foam

To the Editor:

I'd like to correct some misperceptions about foam insulation presented in a recent letter to the editor ("Dislikes Spray Foam Insulation," *Letters*, 12/96).

The letter writer says cutting the foam flush with the stud faces will jeopardize the insulation on any Romex cable sticking out. Yes, if you're pretty careless. In practice, there just aren't that many places where Romex sticks out if the electrician has been careful (it's mostly tucked into junction boxes, which project 1/2 inch from the stud faces). It's really not hard to avoid nicking the insulation at the few places where the Romex does have to stick out without a junction box, though it's true this requires some reasonable caution.

The writer next says it will be too hard to snake cable through the foam and the homeowner will have to use wiremold for any future additional wiring. This is not true. Icynene foam, the type I use, is light density; it's very easy to snake through it. And unlike with fiberglass batts, it's easy to snake through the foam without compromising the R-value or air-sealing.

Finally, the writer says it will be hard

to remove the foam insulation when it comes time to remodel again. In fact, I'd much rather remove the foam (which comes out easily in chunks, leaving a modest residue on the contact surfaces) than a bunch of scratchy, irritating fiberglass any day.

I think foam insulation offers a contractor's best opportunity to idiot-proof the whole problem of air barriers, moisture barriers, and insulation performance. I think this sort of product should be encouraged and advocated rather than too quickly disparaged as "junk."

Paul Eldrenkamp  
Byggmeister Associates  
Newton, Mass.

## CO Detector Clarifications

To the Editor:

Overall, your article "Carbon Monoxide Detectors" (10/96) is very informative, but some clarification is warranted. First, every year CO kills approximately 1,500 people in the U.S. through accidental means and poisons more than 10,000 others. The 200 to 300 number in the article is directly attributed to gas appliances, where there has been specific investigation and a direct link established with a particular appliance. These sta-

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tistics that I have mentioned do not include any suicides attributed to CO.

The American Gas Association (AGA) study mentioned in the sidebar on nuisance alarms is in error because it does not define "false alarms." The fact is that the CO detectors that did go into alarm fully met the UL 2034 standards in effect at the time (1994). Various experts in the field of CO publicly stated that "there were no false alarms," just undetected sources of CO when the testing was done. Because the CO detector manuals instruct consumers to shut off appliances and ventilate the premises whenever the alarm sounds, the expectation of finding CO when emergency response people arrive 20 minutes to several hours later is unrealistic.

Art Springer  
Quantum Group, Inc.  
San Diego, Calif.

## Drywall Professionals

To the Editor:

Over the years your articles have been professional in tone and content. "Hanging and Finishing Drywall" (11/96), however, belonged in a handyman magazine, not in your journal. The introduction has an offensive bias: You may do the work yourself because the "sub has skipped town." Even in the midst of Michigan's firearm season, I have crews hanging for me (perhaps because they are professionals and I pay on time).

Another discomfiting premise is that scheduling and quality are controlled better with "your own crew." Completion time is part of scheduling, not just a Monday or Tuesday starting date.

It seems arrogant to suppose that amateurs (I am certainly one if I am out of my own trade) can compete in the timeliness and quality demanded by the new construction we face. There's more than "many hours" to the making of a good hanger or finisher.

Kenneth Fizette  
Fenton, Mich.

## Pricey Underlayment

To the Editor:

In your December 1996 issue (*For What It's Worth*), you describe a product named R-432 and state that it is priced competitively with felt paper. Apparently you have taken the manufacturer's assurances on pricing. As you can see by the enclosed quotes from my local lumberyard, the price is twice the cost of felt paper.

James McIntyre  
Signet Homes  
Hudson, Ohio

## Watch Out for Power Lines

To the Editor:

Great article by Jay Klein on scaffolding ("Safe Scaffolding Options," 12/96). One thing I might add is cautionary advice regarding incoming electrical service to the building being worked on.

A couple of years ago here in Columbus, two men died when they were rolling metal scaffolding alongside a building and they bumped into a high-tension power lead.

Often, the "drop" from the pole joins the house high on the wall. It's easy to forget about those lines if you're focused on doing your job. But even the briefest contact can knock you off the scaffolding, and perhaps kill you.

If work must occur when power is maintained to the building, contact your local utility company and borrow or rent the heavy-gauge rubber shielding they routinely use. The safety of your employees cannot be compromised.

Steve Thomas  
Columbus, Ohio

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**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, RR 2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477; or e-mail to 76176.2053@compuserve.com.**

