

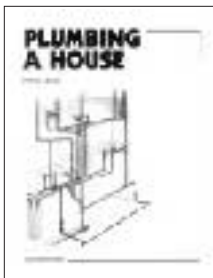
## Primers for Plumbers

by Ted Cushman

This month, *JLC* introduces a new column to present information sources for contractors. From books to videos to the electronic world of CD-ROMs and World Wide Web sites, we'll acquaint you with the best of what's out there.

Topping the bill this month are two handbooks on plumbing from Taunton Press. Authored by veteran plumber Peter Hemp, *Plumbing a House* and *Installing and Repairing Plumbing Fixtures* offer a good refresher course for pros and a great introduction for anyone just starting out. The first volume covers rough plumbing, while the second focuses on finish installations.

**Rough-in for rookies.** *Plumbing a House* starts out with basic chapters on tools and materials, then moves into a thorough discussion of pipe sizing and



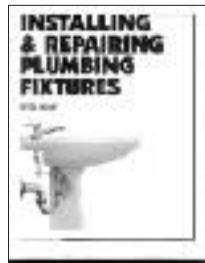
**Plumbing a House** by Peter Hemp (Taunton Press, 1994; \$29.95).

joinery. Drain, waste, and vent (DWV) lines and water supply lines each have their own chapters. Hemp also provides a chapter each on gas supply lines and gas appliance venting, and finishes with a general discussion of remodeling.

The discussion of DWV gives thorough instructions for both cast-iron and plastic pipe, and even includes a section on connecting to existing terracotta pipe. In the supply department, the discussion of copper pipe joinery is very detailed, but Hemp touches only briefly on plastic pipe like polybutylene and polyethylene — you'd need to

know more than he tells you before trying to rough-in plastic lines.

**The fine points of finish plumbing.** Like the first volume, *Installing and Repairing Plumbing Fixtures* starts with the basics and advances step by step, arriving finally at detailed instructions for installing the whole range of common



**Installing and Repairing Plumbing Fixtures** by Peter Hemp (Taunton Press, 1994; \$19.95).

fixtures, from sinks and commodes to dishwashers and even direct-vent space heaters. This basic-to-advanced pattern is maintained throughout: For instance, an early chapter on tools includes a photo of a set of adjustable wrenches (not an eye-opener for most handymen), then moves on to depict more specialized items such as the basin wrench and the no-hub coupling wrench. Hemp gives advice as elementary as how to hold on to a kitchen sink (a fist through each drain hole works well when dropping in a two-basin model), and as sophisticated as where to locate wall heaters (the code requires a 4-foot horizontal clearance between the wall vent and a window).

On code matters, Hemp gives practical tips about the code in his California locale, but advises readers to carefully consult their own local codes.

**True grit.** Illustrations are plentiful, clear, and helpful in both volumes. The drawings show every last gasket and wing nut, and the photos are simple and uncluttered. The combination of clarity and gritty authenticity makes the books a pleasurable and informative read. ■

Speaking of communication, there's a simple way to learn things and meet people on the Internet — a way that doesn't require Web browsing software or even a membership with America Online or CompuServe. All you need is an e-mail account with any Internet provider to participate in "listserv" groups — special-topic bulletin boards that work via electronic mail. E-mail forums are an easy way for people who share a common interest to get together. Here's how it works: You send an e-mail message to whoever is running the group, asking to subscribe. Once you're a member (it's usually free), you'll automatically receive any message that's posted to the group. Post your own question or comment, and it'll probably be answered.

One caution: Mailing-list groups can generate a surprisingly high volume of mail — on busy days, I often delete a lot of messages without even reading them. In case you start getting too many messages on topics that don't really interest you, be sure to remember how to "unsubscribe."

*JLC* has a listserv that's strictly for contractors and tradespeople. The quickest way to join is by visiting our Web site ([www.bginet.com/jlcforum](http://www.bginet.com/jlcforum)), but you can also just send an e-mail message to [jlcforum@bginet.com](mailto:jlcforum@bginet.com). We'll send back information on how to subscribe.

For restoration specialists and old-house buffs, there's an old-house listserv group that gets a lot of traffic from professional contractors and homeowners. To subscribe, send e-mail to [listserv@listserv.aol.com](mailto:listserv@listserv.aol.com) with the message, "subscribe old-house-I first name last name." (That's the letter I in "old-house-I," not the number 1 — and of course, use your own name.)

Contractors with an interest in environmental issues might enjoy a new listserv managed by *Environmental Building News*, an authoritative source in the field. To subscribe, send an e-mail message to [greenbuilding-request@crest.org](mailto:greenbuilding-request@crest.org) and you'll get instructions back. ■