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Letters

Allowance Markup

To the Editor:

In response to the article "Allowance Pricing That Works" (1/97), we have a suggestion. In addition to defining allowance items with the owners as closely as possible, we explain that owners who overspend will owe us the overspent amount plus a 15% markup. Because our overhead and profit are based upon the gross job amount, no O&P credit is given if they should spend less on allowance items. We have the following language in our contract that might be useful for your readers:

At completion of project, a final allowance tally will be presented to owner with all allowance items at contractor's cost including tax and delivery. Any unused dollar amount of allowances shall be credited to owner at final billing. If, at final allowance tally, the actual costs exceed the total amount of allowances, then that amount over shall be charged to the owner at final billing with a 15% markup on the exceeded amount.

With this language, we are guaranteed a markup on overspent allowances.

Randy Bailey
BW Construction
Boulder, Colo.

Another Foam Fan

To the Editor:

As a low-density-foam contractor, I felt compelled to respond to the concerns of the gentleman from Newton, Mass., who dislikes the foam insulation he refers to as "junk" (*Letters*, 12/96).

While he is correct that the foam has to be sawed flushed with the framing, this is not usually a problem if the wiring is fastened securely before spraying. Wiring for lights is usually con-

tained in an electrical box and is easily avoided during the sawing process. Every once in a while a wire gets nicked, but it is very easily repaired before the drywall is installed.

As for fishing a wire down a wall full of foam, I agree that it's difficult compared with cellulose or fiberglass. But the reason these foams perform so well is because they air-seal the cavities. I don't think many homeowners would be willing to pay the extra energy cost or give up the extra measure of comfort provided by the air-sealing just so they could run a wire down a wall in the future. A good electrician could still easily add a wire or switch without wire mold.

Because the foam is soft and flexible, it can very easily be removed from an open wall cavity without the unpleasantness or mess associated with the removal of other insulations.

It has been over three years since we began using low-density foams, and upon seeing the results and customer satisfaction all I can say is that this is the best "junk" to come along in the insulation industry in a long time.

Charles Scholl, Jr.
Standard Insulating Co.
Utica, N.Y.

Likes Vinyl Drywall Returns

To the Editor:

As a self-employed builder and remodeler, I find your magazine very much in tune with my business. I can't tell you how many times I was having a problem on a job, only to find that you had an article on the topic in that month's edition.

I recently finished building a custom home for a retired couple. Saving money was a major factor, along with

quality and maintenance-free finishes. We saved a lot by choosing vinyl windows. This led to the decision of what to use for extension jams and casing. Clear pine is expensive and didn't make much sense with an all-vinyl window. We considered painted finger-jointed pine, but the clients felt that the beauty of wood is its natural grain, and if we had to paint it, why have it?

That's when I remembered the Trim-Tex ad in your magazine. I used the 800 number to get their catalog and found the product I needed: Giant L Bead with finish trim. The product installs just like drywall corner bead, but has a wide, trimmable, paintable return that slides into the trim piece on the window. The tapers gave it the finishing touches, followed by the painters. The result was neat and clean; the window salesman, the tapers, and the painters were all impressed.

Compared with wood extension jams and casing, I saved 75% on labor, and was able to buy material for every window in the house for what I would have spent on one large window trimmed in wood. I did have trouble, however, locating a dealer to order the product for me, since Trim-Tex won't sell direct (what good is a good product if you can't get it?).

Bill Gilbert
Lagrangeville, N.Y.

OSB-Plywood Hybrid?

To the Editor:

In reference to the gradual replacement of plywood by OSB ("Plywood vs. OSB," 12/96): I still have more confidence in CDX plywood as a sheathing because it doesn't noticeably lose strength after having been soaked with rain the way OSB does. After making the useful discovery that I could manually tear old OSB into small, handy chunks as I loaded it onto my truck, some new nomenclature for the material began to come to mind, as well as a better way to make it.

A better product would be edge-sealed OSB sandwiched between a single ply of plywood on each side, adhered with waterproof glue and form-

ing a protective seal around the OSB core. The smooth ply surface would also make nail heads easier to see.


Bill Thibadeau
Norcross, Ga.

John Lowood responds:

Both CDX plywood and OSB are certified to meet the "Exposure 1" durability requirements, which provide that structural panels will continue to perform as required after exposure to moisture and high humidity as a result of long construction delays. However, depending on thickness, any wood panel left outside so long that it becomes saturated with water can be broken into pieces. Thin OSB panels, when fully saturated, may be somewhat easier to break because the strands are much smaller and thinner than the veneer plies making up the equivalent thickness of plywood.

In answer to Mr. Thibadeau's suggestion of combining OSB and veneer plywood, these combination panels are already on the market in the West, and several eastern manufacturers are investigating the possibility of making them. For more information, contact Advanced Wood Resources, a combi-panel manufacturer, at 514/466-5177.

John Lowood is president of the Structural Board Association of Willowdale, Ontario, representing the OSB industry.

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.

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