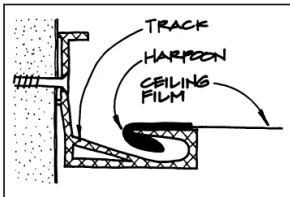


Builders Show Highlights

by Clayton DeKorne

Earlier this year, the editors of *The Journal of Light Construction* attended the National Association of Home Builders Show in Atlanta, Ga. The show's product exhibition filled over 13 acres of the Georgia World Congress Center. Over 1,000 exhibitors displayed an estimated 7,000 products. Here's a small sampling of the products we found the most interesting and the most potentially useful.

Plastic Ceiling



Perhaps the most unusual product on the floor was the *Stretch Ceiling System*, a PVC film that can be stretched across a ceiling. It is marketed primarily for commercial rehabs in place of conventional suspended ceilings. The plastic film is heat-welded to a rubber "harpoon" that clips over a PVC J-track. The track is nailed, screwed, or shot to the perimeter walls of a room. Ceiling lights can be accommodated with a PVC ring (for cans) or a two-sided tape. The material has an amazing elastic memory. At the show's display, a man bounced from the ceiling as if on a trampoline until he had stretched it to the floor. He then applied heat from a salamander and the ceiling shrank back in place. We're not sure how this quality will be useful in ceiling applications but with a little imagination who knows? For more information, contact Barrisol North America, 1340 Depot St., Suite 110, Cleveland, OH 44116; 216/331-0485.

Accessible Kitchens



Granberg Superior offers a line of adjustable-height cabinets and countertops for accessible kitchens. Aside from their motorized capabilities, they are of good quality and look nice in their own right. The motorized coun-

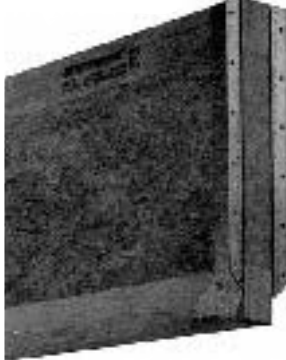
The Journal's pick of curious, interesting and useful products.

ters and cases seem especially well-suited to homes shared by both handicapped and fully mobile individuals. The cabinets use 110-volt electric motors with worm-gear lifts that seem simple and durable. And they appear straightforward to install. Other innovations include 18-inch bases below the adjustable countertops that move up and down with the countertops and also slide from side to side. And a soft-edged door opening on the corner turn table prevents pinched fingers. The drawer pulls are extra wide and deep (just over 2 inches). They make a good argument that "accessible" design doesn't just have to be for handicapped people.

The cabinets are good quality, European-style, frameless cabinets with 35-millimeter hinges and bearing ruler slides. They are a cut above the average prefab cab. Choices of oak or laminate edges, and veneered or laminated faces are available.

The manufacturer won't provide the tracking mechanisms and hardware alone—you have to buy the whole kitchen. But you can deal direct with the company. For more information, contact Granberg Superior or Systems, Inc., Suite 24, 1221 State St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101 (805/965-0998); or 336 Packham Ave., Saskatoon, SK Canada S7N 2T1 (306/374-9440).

I-Joist Reformulated



At first glance, *Arrowood* looks like an LVL I-joist. But this new composite framing material has a full 1½-inch-thick OSB web between parallel laminated flanges. The thick web offers a few clear advantages over conventional I-joists. It eliminates the need for compression bracing at the end of joists and rafters, you don't have to scrap in a block to cross-cut with a circular saw, and you don't need specialty clips. Also it offers higher strengths so it may be ideal for long spans. It is available in lengths up to 36 feet. Like LVL lumber, it maintains its dimensional stability better than solid-sawn material and there are no crowns and defects. But unlike LVL lumber, this stuff is heavy. A 1-foot 2x10 (nominal) weighs 4 pounds (compare 1 pound, 14 ounces for a

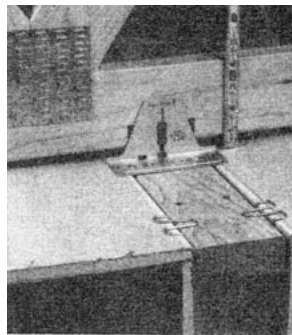
2x10 Trus-Joist or about 2 pounds for a solid-sawn spruce 2x10). For more information, contact Fibreboard Technologies, P.O. Box 3250, Roxboro, NC 27573; 919/599-1000.

Wet Weather Caulk



Oil Wet Sealant is a transparent, synthetic rubber sealant. It looks a lot like clear silicon, but unlike silicon, it can be painted over and is easily cleaned off glass with liquid soap. It can also be used in some extraordinary, but useful, situations. A display at the show, for instance, confirmed that it can cure underwater. And, it reportedly will adhere to air barriers, oil paper, and even frost-covered metal flashing. And its lifetime? No predictions are offered. Its been on the European market for 10 years and the manufacturer claims there haven't been any failures. Oil Wet is imported from Germany by XYZ Trading Co., Inc., 5201 Reichhold Rd., Holt, AL 35404; 205/556-6400.

Floating Corner System

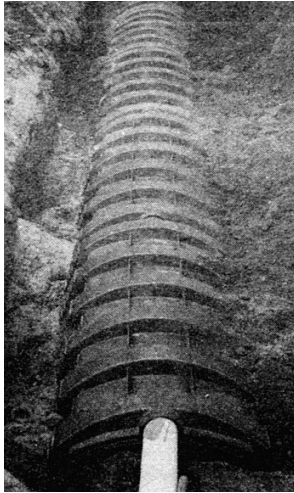


Two new products look useful in the battle against drywall corner cracks caused by truss uplift.

The *Trus-Float-R* is nailed into the top plate of a partition wall. A single nail that slides in a groove is tacked into the bottom truss cord. The truss is then allowed to move with seasonal changes.

The *Gyp-Float-R* is used in conjunction with the truss clip to secure the drywall corner. It clips onto the top plate of the wall and backs the ceiling drywall at the corner for taping. The ceiling drywall is then secured to the trusses in the field only, leaving a "float distance" of 12 to 16 inches from the corner. For more information, contact Stud Claw/USA, 5370 Chestnut Ridge Road, Orchard Park, NY 14127; 716/662-7877.

Leach Field System



The *Infiltrator* may be a cost-effective alternative to gravel leach beds and trenches. The system consists of plastic chambers that are the size and shape of 55-gallon drums. These are laid out with the open side down and in a line at the base of a trench. A splash plate is screwed at the base of the inlet pipe. The "field" is then backfilled with native soil, though coarse sand is recommended if the soil has a very low perc. They can also be placed in a mound if required. This system won't work any wonders to change the hydraulics of the soil, but it may be easier and cheaper to install than concrete settlement tanks or, where gravel is hard to get, even gravel leach fields.

The system provides an open area of soil for waste water to drain into. According to the manufacturer, this system can accommodate higher volumes of waste water for peak loads than equal-sized gravel fields where the soil area would be masked by gravel. This reportedly allows builders to reduce the size of their leach fields. But, of course, that is up to the discretion of local code officials. For more information, contact *Infiltrator Systems, Inc.*, 123 Elm St., Suite 12, Old Saybrook, CT 06475; 203/388-6639.

Flexible Gas Tubing

Until recently, flexible gas lines have been limited to hook-ups for movable appliances (between a stove and the wall, for instance.) But a new corrugated stainless steel gas tubing is part of a whole new gas distribution system. The American Gas Association requires manufacturers of the flexible tubing to provide everything that's needed to run from a meter to an appliance. A complete package includes the tubing, fittings, manifolds, regulators, clips, striker plates for studs and joists (required by code), cutting and flanging tools, and a detailed installation manual.

Two companies, *Interior Piping Systems, Inc.* and *Hitachi Metals*, exhibited such systems. The new piping systems are similar in ways to an electric service. Separate lines for different zones can be run off a high pressure feed (like a home run) which may make it ideal for multifamily installations. Because elbows and threading machines are eliminated (only hand tools are required), the labor savings



could be significant, although materials costs will be high. And the pipe can be snaked through walls and ceilings which is an obvious boon to remodelers. For more information, contact *Dormont Manufacturing Co.*, Interior Piping Systems, 5601 Butler St., Pittsburgh, PA 15201 (412/782-0916); or *Hitachi Metals America, Ltd.*, 2400 Westchester Ave., Purchase, NY 10577 (914/694-9200).

Chimney Cap and Damper



The *Lock-Top Damper* is a stainless-steel cap that can be shut from inside to damper a fire, and seal out the cold or critters. In the open position it continues to act as a weather cap which might help eliminate backdrafting in some down-pressure situations. The cap is mounted on heavy-gauge, stainless-steel spring wires that look convincingly durable. One possible drawback is that it doesn't include a spark arrester which is required by many codes. But one could be fashioned on site to accommodate the opening and closing chain. For more information, contact *Fireplace Technologies, Inc.*, Louisville, KY 40210; 502/772-1067. ■