

Rigid Insulation for Basement Walls

by Charles Wardell

The design of *Styrofoam Wallmate* insulation was the answer to the perennial demand for a simple way to insulate and finish basement space. The manufacturer put a 3/4-inch-deep by 1 1/2-inch-wide rabbet along each long edge of a 2x8 piece of 1 1/2-inch-thick extruded polystyrene board. When two sheets are butted together, the rabbets form a 3-inch-wide vertical channel. When used to insulate an



entire wall, the rabbets form a series of 2-foot on-center channels that are just big enough for 1x3 furring strips, which can then be fastened through the insulation and into the wall with Tapcon-type screws. The furring strips hold the insulation in place and act as a screw base for drywall.

Wallmate has an R-value of R-7.5 and serves as both insulation and vapor barrier. The furring strips don't touch the masonry, and the wall is easier to build and is thinner than a stud wall. Wallmate sells for \$7 to \$8 per sheet.

Contact: Dow Chemical Co., Customer Information Center, P.O. Box 1206, Midland, MI 48674; 800/441-4369.

Circle #1 on Reader Service Card

Washable Flat Latex Paint

When I first heard about Sherwin-Williams' *EverClean*, I was skeptical. The manufacturer claimed that you could wipe stains off this flat latex paint as easily as if it were a gloss



enamel. So I ordered a can and gave it the "Evan test." Evan is my six-year-old, and after using EverClean on the inside of a closet, I let him loose with a handful of crayons. The wall wasn't as easy to clean as advertised: Getting the stains off required some hard work with a scrubbing sponge. But the stains came off and the paint didn't. When we tried the same stunt with a section of ordinary flat latex, the paint came off the wall after a few scrubs.

The difference is obvious when the two paints are photographed at 1,000x magnification. Pockmarks in the standard latex surface (left) easily trap and hold dirt and stains. Cleaning scrubs away the surface, leaving shiny spots or, as in my experiment, bare spots. By contrast, the EverClean surface (right) is much smoother, pierced only by an occasional pinhole. According to the manufacturer, the "secret" is a process that makes the otherwise ordinary ingredients less porous.

A gallon of EverClean costs around \$27 and can be mixed in 600 pastel and mid-tone colors. (The company is still working on the deep tones.) It's available through Sherwin-Williams' nationwide network of more than 2,000 paint stores.

Contact: Sherwin-Williams Co., 101 Prospect Ave., Cleveland, OH 44115; 216/566-2000.

Circle #2 on Reader Service Card

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

Versatile Ladder Product



Painting or repairing the corner of a hip roof overhang is a risky ballet that often requires a worker to hang off the side of a ladder poised dangerously close to the corner of the house. The *Corner Buddy* aluminum ladder stabilizer makes the job safer by wrapping around the corner itself. But the *Corner Buddy* isn't just for corners. The manufacturer says that it will adapt to any wall contour, including the round or hex-shape bay windows found on Victorian-style homes.

The *Corner Buddy* is painted safety yellow with an electrostatically applied powder-coat finish (the type of coating used on refrigerators). It comes with rubber bumpers to keep it from digging into the siding, and it has been tested by an independent laboratory to a load of 1,400 pounds without deforming. It lists for about \$39.

Contact: Qual-Craft Industries, P.O. Box 559, Stoughton, MA 02072; 617/344-1000.

Circle #3 on Reader Service Card

Rugged Wrist Support

Years of using hammers and other hand tools can chafe and inflame tendons in the wrist. As tendons swell, they squeeze the nerves that pass through the wrist. This causes tingling, numbness, or pain, especially at night or after work—a condition known as Carpal Tunnel Syndrome. Although the pain is usually confined to the wrist, it can sometimes spread to the elbow. In the worst cases, the irritation can lead to muscle degeneration at the base of the thumb.

The solution is to keep the wrist in a "neutral" position (straight, not bent), to use tools with comfortable, nonslip

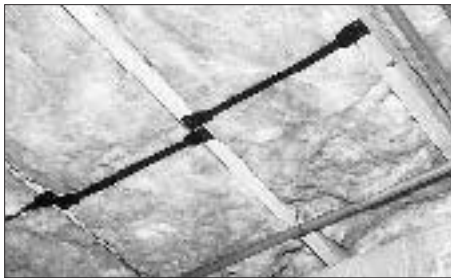


grips, and to avoid pounding on the base of the wrist. The *Ultra-Guard* carpal tunnel wrist support can help with all of these. It's made from sturdy neoprene rubber and includes a flexible plastic insert that limits hand flexing. A three-inch-wide wrap-around strap provides extra support to the wrist, while extra neoprene in the palm area supplies added impact protection. Inside the support, the hand is cushioned by a soft terry material. The company also makes elbow and back supports.

Contact: OK-1 Manufacturing Co. Inc., P.O. Box 736, Altus, OK 73522; 800/654-9873.

Circle #4 on Reader Service Card

Plastic Insulation Strap



The makers of the *Insul-Strap* insulation support tell of a young New York boy who was seriously injured when a ball he was bouncing in his basement struck a wire insulation support. The wire sprang out and pierced the boy's throat, damaging his vocal cords. In another case, a homeowner lost an eye when a wire support sprang loose while he was removing an insulation batt in his crawlspace. In both cases, the insulation contractors were sued and forced to pay damages.

Unlike wires, *Insul-Straps* have no sharp edges or ends. A 1½ inch-wide

flange at each end allows them to be stapled to the bottom face of the floor joists or trusses, and are thin enough not to compress the insulation or bulge the dry-wall. Though made from flexible plastic, the ¾-inch-wide supports are kept rigid by a crease in the center section. The one drawback I found was that they take longer to install than wire supports.

A case of 2,400 straps costs \$32 for the 16-inch strap (\$46 for the 24-inch strap). Discounts are available on larger quantities.

The company also makes an *Insul-Strap* for steel framing. An adhesive strip on each tab sticks to the face of the joist.

Contact: Insul Industries, 611 Summit Ave., Suite 12, Greensboro, NC 27405; 910/272-7702.

Circle #5 on Reader Service Card

Handy Hole Filler



Fill an empty tube of Mennen Speed Stick with spackle and you'll understand *Erase-A-Hole*. This gypsum-based product is a blend of drywall compound and hardening agents. (The manufacturer calls it "Bondo in a tube.") To use it, simply rub it over the hole with a circular motion, like an eraser, then wipe off the excess with a damp sponge. Though marketed for do-it-yourselfers, I find *Erase-A-Hole* is a useful addition to my toolbox for small patching jobs. A 4½-ounce can costs less than \$5 and will fill about four dozen ½-inch-diameter holes.

Contact: Professional Drywallers Inc., 7802 E. Kimsey Ln., Scottsdale, AZ 85257; 602/994-0313. ■

Circle #6 on Reader Service Card