

by Dave Holbrook

Noise-Control Batts

The survey results are in: 12 out of 13 people don't want to hear any sounds coming from the bathroom. Ignoring that thirteenth character, perforated white *NoiseReducer* batts



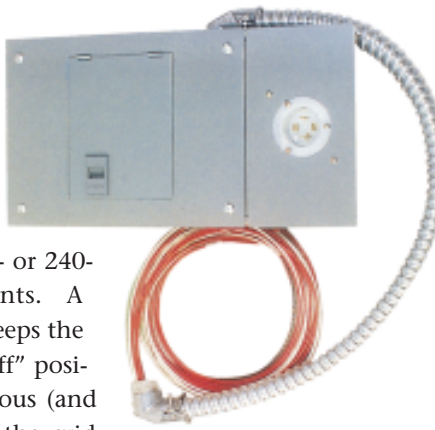
offer improved acoustical absorption when used to fill interior stud bays. The manufacturer claims the kraft-faced, 3 1/2-inch-thick batts add 4 to 12 points to the sound transmission class rating of the wall assembly. (Plan on using thermally-rated insula-

tion in exterior walls.) The batts come in 15- and 23-inch widths at a cost of about 16¢ per square foot.

Contact: CertainTeed Corp., Valley Forge, PA; 800/233-8990; fax 610/341-7571; www.certainteed.com.

Emergency Power Panel

We may have put the fear of Y2K behind us, but there are still weather- and accident-related power failures to worry about. The *Pre-Wired Generator Panel* employs a manual switchover to isolate up to six fast-tripping, dedicated circuits. These can be adapted to various 120- or 240-volt load requirements. A mechanical interlock keeps the main breaker in the "off" position to prevent dangerous (and illegal) backfeeding of the grid. At \$590, not a bad price for independence (generator not included).



Contact: Square D, Palatine, IL; 800/392-8781; fax 847/925-7271; www.squared.com.

Rust-Free Fence

Good fences make good neighbors — and may even keep them out of the swimming pool. The *Castlegate*, *Windsor*, and *Legacy* series of high-strength aluminum fencing matches the ruggedness of wrought iron, but with a lifetime limited warranty against rust and defects. The 6-foot-long sections come in 3-, 4-, 5-, and 6-foot heights, with a white or black finish. System options include posts, gates, decorative scrolls, and finials. Available by special order at leading home centers, from \$55 to \$275 per section.



Contact: Builders Edge, Pittsburgh, PA; 800/969-7245; fax 412/782-3314; www.buildersedge.com.

Stone Free

It's a safe bet that you've mistaken manufactured stone veneer for the real McCoy. *European Castle Stone* is cast in molds taken from real stone, and faithfully replicates its color and texture. A patented interlocking mortar groove eliminates grout lines for a clean, cut-stone



appearance. The installed cost is reported to be between \$7.50 and \$12 per square foot, depending on project type and size.

Contact: Cultured Stone, Napa, CA; 800/255-1727; fax 707/255-5572; www.culturedstone.com.

Computer-Controlled Humidifier

Unregulated humidity can cause condensation to saturate insulation in exterior wall cavities. It also supports dust mites and mildew growth. By comparing outdoor temperature to indoor relative humidity up to 86,000 times per hour, the



Aprilaire Humidifier automatically adjusts to maintain optimal indoor humidity without exceeding the condensation point. This ensures personal comfort along with the protection of the structure and furnishings. Add it to the ductwork for between \$275 and \$350, installed.

Contact: Research Products Corp., Madison, WI 53701; 800/545-2219; fax 608/257-4357; www.resprod.com.

Fixture Family

Selecting compatible but distinctive light fixtures for an open floor plan is no easy task, especially if it falls to you. Check out the *Verona* and *Masira Collections*, which include handsome chandeliers, wall brackets, hall and foyer fixtures, and even outdoor lighting, to create a unified lighting scheme that will suit many decorating styles. Prices vary according to fixture.

Contact: Progress Lighting, Spartanburg, SC; 864/599-6000; fax 864/599-6151; www.progresslighting.com.



Foolproof Shock Protection

The NEC specifies ground-fault circuit protection for bathroom, garage, outdoor, crawlspace and unfinished basement, rooftop, kitchen, and wet bar outlet locations. Unlike standard GFCIs, which may be reset even if damaged after a voltage surge, the Decora-compatible Smart



Lock GFCI is designed to mechanically prevent the reset button from re-engaging, thereby alerting the user to a faulty device. It also has a diagnostic feature to detect line-load miswiring. It's available in 15 and 20 Amp versions at a cost just slightly higher than standard GFCI devices. The manufacturer is anticipating widespread acceptance of the device, however, and a price to

match the current standard.

Contact: Leviton Manufacturing Co., Little Neck, NY; fax 800/323-8920; www.leviton.com.

Clever Cord Connector

Anyone who's tried to come up with a foolproof way to keep a tool solidly connected to an extension cord will marvel over the brilliant simplicity of the *Cord Connect*. Slip one half of the cylindrical connector over the tool cord and the other half over the extension



cord. Then

plug the cords together and twist the threaded connector halves together. The connector withstood a two-man tug-of-war here at the office with no slippage, and even protects the plugs from mud and snow. Quicker, safer, and stronger than tying a knot, and it's cheap — suggested retail price is \$3.49 (sold through distributors).

Contact: Angel-Guard Products, Worcester, MA; 508/791-1073; fax 508/791-2206; www.angelguardproducts.com.

Radiant Heat Retrofit

A warm tile floor is on a lot of remodeling and new home wish lists, but not if it means installing hydronic tubing in a thick bed of concrete, changing the floor elevation, and breaking the budget. *Nuheat* provides a simple alternative with custom prefabricated 110-volt electric "blankets," controlled by an in-room thermostat on your dedicated GFCI-protected circuit. Installed directly in the thinset adhesive under a ceramic tile or



stone surface, the $\frac{3}{32}$ -inch-thick mat won't change the floor elevation. Sold through authorized dealers; installed cost ranges between \$12 and \$15 per square foot.

Contact: Nuheat Industries, B.C., Canada; 800/778-9276, fax 604/599-6092; www.nuheat.com.

