



# THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

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JLC's

# Letters

## Condensation on Metal Roofs

To the Editor:

The article "Installing Metal Panel Roofs" by Chad Taylor (5/00) was informative and interesting. In many years of building additions and remodeling in the Northeast, I have been interested in problems related to moisture entrapment and inadequate ventilation. The company featured in the article, with nearly 40 years' experience, has obviously been doing its work satisfactorily. However, while their practice of installing roof panels directly over asphalt felt may be appropriate in Florida, it may not be applicable to northern climates.

Condensation on the underside of roof panels from moisture entrapment and wide daily and seasonal temperature variations may result in corrosion and eventual perforation from underneath. Recommendations I have encountered call for the installation of strapping perpendicular to the ridge on 24-inch centers, then another set parallel to the ridge as purlins for the roof panels. With soffit and ridge venting this provides ventilation for moisture escape.

Denton Lyon  
New Haven, Vt.

*Chad Taylor responds: Condensation under metal roofing may be more of a problem in colder areas of the country than it is here in Florida. Most of our metal roofs consist of Acrylume roofing panels installed on 30-pound felt over plywood, and we haven't had any corrosion problems on the underside of the metal panels.*

## Screw the Ribs or Flats?

To the Editor:

Chad Taylor's method ("Installing Metal Panel Roofs," 5/00) of screwing the panels on the ridges went out with

the old ring-shank nail system in this area. I'm not saying he's wrong, but I am wondering what's different about the brand of panel he's using that it uses a different fastening method. Every manufacturer's instructions that I've seen, as well as real-world experience (I've installed many acres of metal of various brands over all kinds of residential and commercial structures), says to screw the flats. The reason is that a screw through the rib doesn't clamp the metal securely between the neoprene washer and the sheathing underneath. This allows wind forces and expansion and contraction to work the metal, creating a dimple under the screw, which results in a leak.

Don Bedrick  
Glennallen, Alaska

*Chad Taylor responds: A roofing installer should always follow the panel manufacturer's instructions. The 5-V crimp panel common in Florida differs from the panel profiles that are common in many parts of the country. Installing fasteners only in the flat part of a 5-V crimp panel may put the fasteners too far from the panel's edges, allowing wind to lift up the panel edges and bend the panel back. Our company has had excellent success installing our screws in the ribs of 5-V panels. Several manufacturers of 5-V crimp panels recommend installing fasteners on the ribs, not the flats, including Southeastern Metals of Jacksonville, Fla.*

## Vinyl Is Number One

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the article on vinyl siding in the June 2000 issue ("Builder's Guide to Vinyl Siding"). For several years, I've worked for one of the major vinyl manufacturers listed, and I am currently working as a consultant for another. I've

also supplied similar services for a major fiber-cement siding manufacturer in the interim.

The article was good, but I came away from it with an overall negative feeling. Vinyl is the number one cladding, having replaced wood several years ago. Having worked extensively in the design and application of both vinyl and fiber-cement sidings, I think the reasons vinyl has risen to its current position are obvious: It's easy to work with and offers tremendous variety. The tools required are also light and simple.

As with any material, the skill of the applicator, both in the expertise and creativity of its application, has a lot to do with the overall look, as was stated. Most good vinyl applications are overlooked, as they don't show the characteristic application faults of a bad job.

Rick Lappin  
Industrial Designer  
via e-mail

### Keep It Simple, Please

To the Editor:

Regarding Joseph Lstiburek's letter on vapor barriers (*Letters*, 5/00): I am a building official in Colorado with only a B.S. in engineering, and I can say that most contractors aren't interested in scientific explanations of how building systems work. They only want to know what is required by code and how to build it. Most contractors leave the engineering to licensed engineers and then build according to the approved plans. Yes, it is in the contractor's best interest to build a sound structure, and knowing how building systems work is helpful, but let's be practical. Many are too busy just trying to complete their projects on time and on budget. Science has to be communicated in a practical manner that an average contractor can grasp and understand. Explaining the physics of thermal dynamics, which can be difficult to understand for an engineering student, let alone a builder, does not answer the question, "What is the best way to install a vapor barrier for my

specific project?" Thank you for the opportunity to express my opinion.

Blas Hernandez  
Building Official  
Commerce City, Colo.

### Bungalow Windows

To the Editor:

Imagine my delight when my first issue of *JLC* contained Doug Walter's fine article about bungalow additions (*By Design*, 5/00). This seems to be something many architects and builders get wrong, and I hope many will take it to heart.

I take issue with only one point in the article and that is about casement windows. While I agree that sliders are highly inappropriate, many bungalows have a combination of double-hung and casement windows. My current bungalow project (ninth in a series) has casement windows in front and double-hungs on the sides. Some bungalows have all casements. Often the front windows have elaborate muntin patterns while the side windows are plain, although often all the windows in the house have muntins. Bungalow casement windows are simply hinged like doors; they don't have cranks like modern casements. To keep them open, one can buy brass casement operators or use the Frank Lloyd Wright method, a hook-and-eye where the hook is about a foot long. And I don't think I can stress this strongly enough: Bungalow windows should be made of wood.

Jane Powell  
House Dressing  
Oakland, Calif.

### Good Training

To the Editor:

I started driving a ready-mix truck about three weeks ago. After minimal training, they turned me loose. I learned more from your article ("Concrete Basics," 6/00) than from experience or company training. Thank you for a very informative article.

Ted Gilbert  
Friendsville, Pa.  
via *JLC*Online

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## I-Joist Caution

To the Editor:

In the article on Advantech sheathing (2/00), I noticed that the builder says he always uses ring-shank nails and TJM I-joists. Trus Joist advises against using ring shank nails. Their joists are dimensionally stable and the top flange will not shrink back around the larger hole like dimensional lumber will. This can lead to nail pops later. Just thought you'd like to know.

Jim Wise  
TJ-Expert Operator  
Stock Lumber  
Janesville, Wisc.

## Shower Head Height

To the Editor:

I read with interest the article on shower design guidelines (*Kitchen & Bath*, 6/00). For the most part, I felt the author was on the mark. However, I take issue with a few of the suggested height dimensions.

Since most people using a combination tub/shower will opt, for the sake of time, to use the shower, I find that it's best if both the mixing valve and the shower head are placed higher. I generally place the center of the mixing valve at 36 inches above the floor, which puts it at approximately waist height to the user. The shower heads currently in vogue tend to be much larger, with a correspondingly greater drop, than older ones. Placing the shower arm at 82 to 84 inches above the floor allows for the almost 7-inch drop to the bottom of the typical shower head. This gives room for a 6-foot adult to stand beneath the shower head and shampoo without bending the neck downward to avoid a head bang.

The best placement of the shower arm is the one which will accommodate the tallest potential user. This is a better guideline than an arbitrary numerical height. Seventy-eight inches should be considered a minimum height.

Willard J. Parker  
Remodeling By Willard  
New Haven, Conn.

## Compact Fluorescent Tips

To the Editor:

Regarding the article "Shopping for Recessed Lights" (6/00): In my ongoing quest for energy efficiency and lower customer energy bills in housing, I often recommend using compact fluorescent bulbs (CFLs) in recessed lighting. I recommend the Alzak or other highly reflective inner reflector in combination with a screw-in, electronic ballast compact fluorescent bulb, instead of the fixtures that have a ballast and bulb separate. The fixtures with the separate ballasts are designed for commercial use, mostly in drop ceilings, where you can move an adjacent ceiling tile to replace the ballast. If you install one of these in a drywall ceiling, you may be ripping out drywall when you have to replace the ballast. (Yes, ballasts do need replacing sooner or later.)

When you choose the bulb for the recessed light, choose a CFL that is rated for the higher temperature of the can (such as Phillips SLS series). There are also Phillips dimmable screw-in CFLs that use conventional wall dimmers, and some of these may also be rated for the higher temperatures.

*Don't* put any non-airtight recessed fixtures in insulated ceilings, at least in the North — they are guaranteed

to cause ice dams, no matter what type of bulb you put in.

Andy Shapiro  
Energy Balance Inc.  
Montpelier, Vt.

## The True Value of the Land

To the Editor:

I was especially compelled by the article about the carpenter Thomas Johnson's hidden underground house, built on public land and later demolished (*Backfill*, 4/00). The article hints at the ambiguity of private land ownership, a man-made concept only recently invented by Europeans. For tens of thousands of years, we existed harmoniously without these institutions, as did many other cultures in more recent times, including the Native American peoples. While I'm generally happy with the system and laws we have now, it's important to always challenge and re-evaluate these things. It was refreshing to read an article that brought the land ownership concept under a different light. Thomas Johnson's experience, while tragic at the end, showed that there can be strong emotional ties to the land, and that land has intrinsic value, not just value as a resource to consume.

Glenn Kukla  
Covington, Ky.

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