

# THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

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JLC's

# Letters

## Bleach on Concrete

To the Editor:

In the item "Fixing a Moldy Crawlspace" (*On the House*, 12/00), Bill Rose cautions not to use bleach around concrete, because "when bleach comes in contact with anything having a pH less than 8, chlorine gas is formed." Now I am no scientist, but I do recall that concrete has a pH of around 12 to 13. I contacted the Chlorine Institute to confirm my findings and they stated that they did not know of anything in concrete that would cause the release of chlorine gas. However, Mr. Rose is correct about the release of chlorine gas when bleach comes in contact with anything having a pH less than 8.

David Patrician  
via e-mail

*Bill Rose responds: My mistake, and an embarrassing one. Bleach has very little reaction with pure concrete, which is alkaline, as you point out. Concrete may harbor other compounds that may react with bleach. Acids such as pet urine can react with bleach to form chlorine gas, and ammonia compounds (many found in cleaning products) can react to form chloramine gases. Both gases are dangerous. Bleach should be used only with very good ventilation.*

## Steel Joist Clear Span

To the Editor:

The article "Framing Living Space Over a Garage" (12/00) described several structural systems used to support floor loads over a garage space while minimizing or eliminating support columns within the space.

In my own three-story Federal-style house (20x30 feet), I solved two similar problems using light steel C-joists. First, I supported a 20x21-foot 80-psf-live-load deck over my ground floor

shop using 925 SJ 16 steel joists 12 inches on-center. This represents a 21-foot span with no intruding columns in the shop space.

The structural system shows no sign of distress after 12 years of use, one hurricane, and many near-hurricane-force nor'easters on the Connecticut coast. Use of light steel C-joists presented no problem for the carpenters, who had previously worked only with wood. I would use light steel construction components again.

Robert Abramson, P.E.  
via e-mail

## A Bigger Slice of the Pie

To the Editor:

Regarding the article "Working for the Architect" (*Legal Adviser*, 12/00), as general contractors and construction managers, we have a policy at our company that we will not enter into a contract with anyone other than the owners of the property. There are the obvious financial and legal issues, several of which were brought up in your article.

The position of an architect who is considered a "professional" is supposed to be acting in the best interest of their client. If they act as both general contractor and designer, it sets up the classic situation where the fox is guarding the hen house.

If there are serious design flaws or problems with the plans and specifications, the contractor, if hired by the owner, can answer or report to the owner with greater freedom. Although they [the contractor] might still be subject to retaliation or repercussions in regard to their relationship with the architect, they are not contractually tied to them. Likewise, the architect can objectively inform his client as to the performance of the contractor without fearing the same issues.

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Consider this: The AIA contracts say that, in the event of a dispute, the architect will act as the initial arbitrator between the parties. How can the architect maintain any objectivity and impartiality if they are involved in the construction *and* the design of the project? Whose interests will they be protecting?

When I questioned an architect as to why more and more architects are involving themselves in this practice, his answer was simple: "For the money, a bigger slice of the pie." By the way, that's our pie they're helping themselves to.

Mitchell Miller, president  
Miller/Robinson Construction, Inc.  
via e-mail

### Don't Underestimate Customers

To the Editor:

Dennis Dixon has an interesting opinion on customer-supplied materials (*Letters*, 12/00). Consumers don't want to see the cost of easily purchased materials exorbitantly higher than the local big box store advertises. Most can appreciate the concept of making a reasonable profit but don't want to feel gouged afterward. Yes, there will always be a percentage that expects the bottom price, but they also aren't figuring the time for pick-up

and delivery, the cost of maintaining a commercial vehicle, and so forth. A simple and honest explanation of this difference is always appreciated.

Rick Lappin  
via e-mail

### Encourage English

To the Editor:

Your *Notebook* article "Managing the Multilingual Job Site" (10/00) regarding the increasing numbers of non-English-speaking workers in the construction trades did not cover the most important factor: Immigrant workers must be given all possible incentives and encouragement to learn English as soon as possible; not only for the convenience of their employers, but to expedite their own goal of a successful life in this country.

Chris Brown  
Jacksonville, Fla.  
via e-mail

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