

Letters

Deep Seat Cut Questioned

To the Editor:

The article "Fast Layout for Tall Rake Walls" (4/01) appears to recommend a construction shortcut that is not permitted by the building code used widely in the Northeast (CABO One and Two Family Dwelling Code). The author finds himself with a plan showing both 2x6 and 2x10 rafters. To simplify his wall framing, he sets all the wall plates at the same elevation. To achieve a consistent eaves line, he is then forced to cut a deep notch to form his birdsmouth in the 2x10 rafters. The code prohibits such notching for the reason that horizontal shear forces at such notches can cause splitting to propagate up the member from the corner of the notch. Such notches are commonly worse in the field than illustrated in the neat details shown in the article, because often the framer overcuts to get the waste to fall out cleanly without chiseling.

The better detail, shortening the walls (which the author mentions), is really not much more effort, but will result in a significantly stronger roof.

Carl Mezoff, Architect, P.E.
Stamford, Conn.

Don Dunkley responds: Thanks for your letter. Over the years I've probably installed rafters with a deeper-than-normal seat cut a dozen times. Keep in mind that this was always in a cathedral area where I was increasing the rafter size to accommodate extra insulation. Typically, when I explained to the inspector that I was using a 2x10 rafter where structurally only a 2x6 was required, there was no issue raised. (And, by the way, it is possible to make a neat notch in the field!) On a few occasions I was asked to do one of two things: 1) nail 2-by blocking between the studs, then nail the rafter end to the blocking with 8d nails;

or 2) nail 2-by pressure blocking between the rafters. This was primarily to provide perimeter nailing for the drywall and to help resist twisting of the 2x10 rafters.

The fact that the notch exceeded one-fourth the depth of the stock as allowed by code ('97 UBC, 2320.12.4) did not seem to matter to the inspectors, since the rafter was oversized by two dimensions and I was always careful to use clean stock. But if anyone's in doubt, it's always a good idea to check with the local inspector or a structural engineer before using such a detail.

Brick Ties Needed

To the Editor:

The response to the question on replacing the sheathing in a brick veneer/steel stud wall from the inside (*On the House*, 4/01) was correct in describing the need for an air space, building paper, and sheathing to control moisture penetration. However, the proposed solution missed a critical element of brick veneer construction — the attachment of the veneer to the steel studs with veneer ties. It is imperative that ties be included to transfer loads perpendicular to the wall face to the studs.

Installing such ties from the inside is possible, but difficult. Remedial screw-type ties can be drilled through the sheathing into the backside of the brickwork. Perhaps the existing ties can be modified to penetrate the new sheathing, but that will require attention in placing the sheathing. Perhaps the best approach is to simply replace the entire wall, including the brickwork.

J. Gregg Borchelt, P.E.
Brick Industry Assoc.

The Ups & Downs of OSB

To the Editor:

Regarding the question about which side of OSB goes up (*On the House*,

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1/01): Most manufacturers label OSB (and plywood) "this side down." There are two other reasons besides providing a safer walking surface. First, if the OSB is a T&G product, all the sheets may need to face in the same direction for a proper fit. Second, in order to verify the sheet thickness, maximum span rating, exposure rating, and so forth, it is necessary to have the grade stamp facing down on roof sheathing and floor sheathing so that information can be verified for code compliance after the floor is finished and the roof is shingled.

Peter Kulczyk
Building Codes and Standards
State of Minnesota

Using ICFs in Alaska

To the Editor:

I have a few comments regarding the article "My First ICF Foundation" (4/01). During the last year, I built two houses in Alaska completely of ICFs from foundation to gable peak. I used a panel-type ICF that allows for solid, flat 8-inch-thick concrete walls. My actual product selection (Eco-Block) was based on availability in our area, price, and our technical rep.

As Mr. McGinley pointed out, carpenters adapt to ICFs better than concrete workers. My walls are plumb and square to within 1/4 inch; bracing is the key. We set vertical bracing on 4-foot centers and, on the opposite side of the wall, horizontal bracing on 16-inch centers. Rebar (#5) was placed on 16-inch vertical and horizontal centers, but was not tied to the ICF panels so that we could easily plumb and straighten the walls just before the pour.

To avoid bulges and blow-outs, limit the maximum height of the pour to 4 feet, which should be placed in 2 foot lifts, regardless of manufacturer claims. We found that adding a plasticizer to the concrete mix improved the flow and allowed the first lift to firm up before the second lift. However, do not add the plasticizer until the concrete truck is on site, to allow for consistency.

Planning ahead is extremely impor-

tant, not only for penetrations, but also for design features like the point loads mentioned in the article. For a point load, the ICF can be cut away and a plywood form added to allow the concrete to flow to the outside edge of the structure, and additional steel reinforcement can be added before the pour. Attaching a deck or addition afterward is a simple matter of cutting away the foam ICF and attaching a wooden ledger directly to the concrete.

On average, my three-man crew built, reinforced, and poured 900 square feet of wall per week. We were able to assemble and pour ICF walls in rain and snow, even at temperatures down to 10 degrees. The result was a very strong, airtight structure well-suited to Alaska. After careful sealing techniques for windows and doors, these houses are the tightest I have ever built.

R. Eric Summerfield
Palmer, Alaska

Transferring Responsibility?

To the Editor:

In reading the follow-up of the case where the child was injured on the job site by drywall (*Letters*, 5/01), I was glad to know the GC was not liable, but really have problems with the sub being liable. Let's look at the accountability of parents: Why was the child on site in the first place? Maybe they are looking for a way to relieve their guilt, by transferring the responsibility. I am a parent too, and hate that things like this could happen to our innocent children. But I see too many instances of misdirected anger and accountability, and wonder if this may be one of them.

Debi King
Hayesville, N.C.

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