

Don't Paint Stucco

To the Editor:

I thought "Replacing Windows in Stucco Walls" (6/04) was an excellent article; Mr. Thorvund was right on in addressing the chief problems. I have a comment about painting stucco, which is mentioned near the end of the article. It should be clarified that only if the rest of the stucco on the house is painted should the new repair be painted as well. Otherwise, you don't paint stucco. Even the stucco industry recommends against painting stucco.

My own experience of 40 years in remodeling validates this. Here in Iowa, when I come across stucco homes that have never been painted, the stucco is in excellent condition. Most of the stucco houses in my town are 80 years old or more. The unpainted ones may have minor hairline cracks, but no bulges or scaling; whereas painted stucco homes always look bad, with bulges and general decay. I don't know how fast the decay is accelerated when stucco is painted, but I am sure that it at least cuts the stucco life in half, maybe more.

Les Deal
Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Correcting the Record on Copper Flashing

To the Editor:

I am writing to set the record straight regarding the YorkShield 106 HP flashing, which was highlighted in your July issue. It came as a great disappointment to read that our product is "expensive and reacts badly with ACQ-treated lumber."

As everyone by now is aware, most sales of CCA-treated lumber were disallowed by the Environmental Protection Agency in January 2004. New wood treatments, including

ACQ, have been introduced in order to replace CCA. The chemical composition of most of these new treatments contains a much higher concentration of copper while at the same time eliminating the arsenic component.

Why copper? Copper has long been known to have antimicrobial properties, making it a natural solution to the pressure-treatment issue.

York Manufacturing has been leading the copper flashing industry since 1935, and with the introduction of new lumber treatments, we knew immediately that copper is the permanent and economical solution. As a simple matter of fact, copper flashing is 100% compatible with the copper component in pressure-treated lumber. Logically, this only makes sense. Furthermore, and with direct respect to ACQ compatibility, York has had its product tested with Chemical Specialties Incorporated, and it has been determined that York's copper flashing is compatible with ACQ-treated lumber.

With respect to the cost of our product, I only ask that in the future, *JLC* use some sort of comparative measure so that you can better inform your readers. York offers permanent protection at an affordable price.

Mike Fuller
York Manufacturing, Inc.
Sanford, Maine

Hardworking & Honest

To the Editor:

Today I read Mr. Fairfield's letter ("In Protest," *Letters*, 7/04) bemoaning "slavelike" immigrant labor, and then an article in the *San Francisco Chronicle* describing how Hispanic labor has a much better work ethic ("Speaking Spanish to Stay Afloat," by C.W.

Nevius) ends his article with a prediction — that the children of today's Hispanic laborers will take over the construction industry (perhaps first in California).

I don't know if \$10 an hour is "slave-like," but I believe it's well above the minimum wage, and many workers earn it (although it's well below typical construction industry wages, of course).

Ralph Hueston Kratz, S.E.
Richmond, Calif.

Cross-Vault Ceiling Formula

To the Editor:

The formula in the article "Framing a Cross-Vault Ceiling" (6/04) is useful for laying out arches that are segments of circles; however, it will not define the intersecting diagonals of a cross-vault, which are ellipses. The formula will produce a circular section flatter than the correct elliptical section.

In the particular example given, there is not a significant difference between the true ellipse and the circular segment. However, as the end arches or barrels approach semicircles (quite common in practice) the difference becomes important. Extending the barrels to semicircles in the example given produces a difference of almost 4 inches between the circular segment and the true ellipse. This will produce major lathing difficulties.

James T. Elder
J.T. Elder Construction
Santa Barbara, Calif.

Put In Our Place

To the Editor:

Did I really see the word "pouring" in reference to concrete on the cover? This is a faux pas of incredible magnitude. One of the very first things I learned 25 years ago is that concrete

is “placed,” never “poured.” Please mention this in your next issue, as mine, I guarantee, won’t be the only comment with respect to this.

Love your magazine.

Bill Bartlett

Via email

Hey, I’ve known masons who “butter” bricks with “batter,” and nobody accused them of bad manners! The point you raise, which alludes to water/cement ratios, is valid, but in my experience professional concrete contractors and ready-mix suppliers, who “pour” concrete every day, are on top of it — despite the way we all talk (most of us). Thanks for your comments; glad you like the magazine.

— The Editor

Can’t Find Cover

To the Editor:

How many of your readers noticed that “stucco” was misspelled on the front cover of the June issue, with three c’s?

I really enjoy the magazine. I start with the letters, especially the ones that reference past articles, then I go back to that article and read it again. I always get something extra the second time around. Keep up the good work.

Gary Wilhelm
Columbia, S.C.

Speaking of cement, I’d like to tell you it was an article about that new extra-fortified “triple-C” mix, but what can I say? We look and look and sometimes we don’t see. Thanks for the encouragement.

— The Editor

Design-Build Laws

To the Editor:

We recently received a notice for the *JLC Live* show, which referred to seminars on the design-build concept, including putting architects on your payroll. While there can be many

benefits to design-build, please remember that New York State does not generally allow this type of project. Similarly, we as engineers are not allowed to contract with a builder.

According to the New York State Office of Professions website, “An entity not authorized to provide professional engineering services, such as a general contractor, cannot subcontract with a licensed professional engineer in order to provide engineering services to a third-party client. The basis for professional regulation is that the service of the professional must be provided directly from the professional to the client without any unlicensed third party between the client and the professional. This unlicensed third party may have other interests (such as financial) that could jeopardize the level and/or quality of the professional service received by the client.”

Similarly, the website discusses the role of architects: “One must be licensed in New York State to render or offer to render professional services, and architectural services may not be provided by or through a general business corporation. There is nothing to prevent a contractor from employing or retaining an architect to perform services the company may require, so long as the services are not specific to the needs of their client. An example of a service specific to a client is the signing and sealing of documents for the client’s projects. If a contractor wishes to construct a project for himself or herself and lease, rent, or sell the project when completed, the ‘in-house’ architect may sign and seal the documents. In this situation, the contractor is the client and the professional services provided by the architect are to that client.”

We appreciate the important role that *JLC* plays in providing information to builders and others, and want

to be sure that your readers and show attendees are aware of the limitations that are placed upon design professionals in New York.

Cindy W. Garso, P.E.

Northwoods Engineering, PLLC

Saranac Lake, N.Y.

Tile Is Not the Problem

To The Editor:

The tile shower floor and drain problems described in this month’s Q&A (7/04) have spawned a whole new demand for shower receptors, to which many innovative manufacturers are now responding effectively. The efflorescence that the writer describes, plus concerns about leaking shower membranes, have led my company, in the context of widespread mold litigation, to completely stop using mortar-set shower floors over a membrane.

Michael Byrne’s response may be correct as far as it goes, but with shower receptors like Bonsal’s fiberboard thin-set base, solid-surface, and natural stone available in fully custom configurations at reasonable lead times, a builder who persists in using the failing traditional approach is either exceptionally hard-headed (a requirement for the trade, admittedly) or just not paying attention, given the disaster potential of a leaking shower.

All the shower receptor products are more expensive than the traditional approach so the question for a homebuilder becomes, “Do I save my customer some money on the installation and take a chance on a catastrophic failure that I’ll inherit or do I use the more sensible approach from the beginning?” Hard-headed, sure. Foolish? No thanks.

Leon Meyers
L.E. Meyers Builders
Durham, N.C.

Michael Byrne responds: I started in the tile business in 1968 by working for a repair tileman, 95% of whose business

Poet's Corner

To the Editor:

In response to the version of "My Favorite Things" that was in the magazine a few months ago, my head mason, Rick McGann, penned his masonry and landscaping version.

Paul Eldrenkamp
Byggmeister
Newton, Mass.

My Favorite Things

*Big slabs of granite
with no chips or scratches
Fluffy smooth mortar
with no lumps in batches
Very tight line blocks
with no dips in strings
These are a few of my favorite things*

*When the truck bumps
into tree trunks
when I'm awful mad
I simply remember my favorite things
And then I don't feel so bad*

*Solid cored cubed brick
strapped up and blended
Masonry contracts
left open ended
Mossy old fieldstone,
the coming of spring
These are a few of my favorite things!*

*When the chain slips
When the crane tips
When the days look bad
I simply remember my favorite things
And then I don't feel so sad*

*Number 2 bluestone
with multiple colors
Razor sharp chisels
that never get duller
Flowering dogwoods,
a bobcat that sings!
These are a few of my favorite things*

*When the rain falls
Heavy root balls
When I've just been had
I simply remember my favorite things
And that's when the crew is glad!*

came from the rip-out and repair of stall showers — mostly mud bed showers, I might add. Now, 36 years later, I'm still installing tile.

When done properly, a mortar bed stall shower built in the U.S. will far outlast any residential structure in which it is built. I want to underscore "properly," because 95% of all stall showers built in the U.S. are not built to code. (My experience is not just that of a local installer. I have worked on tile installations in every state except Alaska, I have served as an expert witness for tile installations throughout the U.S., and I had the honor of establishing the Ceramic Tile Educational Foundation on the campus of Clemson University.)

There are two main problems with the way stall showers are built. The first problem is the installer who insists on not becoming educated, and even in the face of overwhelming evidence, continues to use sub-standard methods when working on this type of installation. I have rarely seen a shower pan installed correctly. There is typically no waterproofing on the walls (tarpaper lapped over itself is not waterproofing, but rather a cleavage membrane subject to capillary attraction); no slope below the pan (no better way to create a low-profile indoor septic tank); and no detailing at the shower curb. The pan typically covers only a portion of the curb top, and there are no movement joints where the tiles atop the curb meet the jamb tiles. Because the pan is not joined to the floor waterproofing outside the shower, when the homeowner steps out of the shower, water runs down the glass door onto the gutter where it is then directed right into the cracks between the jamb and the curb.

The second problem is that Americans across the board are taking more showers and using more water more often. The result? There is no dryout time between uses, which means the setting bed becomes saturated. Combine the super-saturated bed over an unsloped pan with capillary attraction and the lack of effective wall waterproofing, and before long you have a

failed installation complete with water-stains on the surrounding finished surfaces and structural damage to boot.

I was one of the first people to learn about Bonsal's Proform shower system, and have demonstrated its installation at JLC Live. This eliminates the super-saturation problem, and no doubt we will be seeing more products like it in the future. But while I like the product, it has a couple of negatives: Walk on the foam floor and you do not get the same solid feel (or sound) that you do on a mortar floor. Plus, while there are some sizing options, there are limitations that are most easily accommodated with the traditional method.

The tone of your letter indicates that you're fed up with "tile" failures, but I want you to know that tile is not the culprit. Have your local installers been trained? Do they have current copies of the TCA Handbook? If not, I suggest you contact Dave Gobis, executive director of the Ceramic Tile Education Foundation (www.tileschool.org) and ask about installer training.

KEEP 'EM COMING!

Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. *The Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to JLC, 186 Allen Brook Ln., Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com.