

On the Job

Office on Wheels

by Sonny Lykos

Like most small contractors, I often use my truck as an office. Since dirty and disorganized isn't the image I want to project to potential clients, I try to keep the interior tidy. It's a constant battle, but I've made a couple of recent changes that seem to be helping.

First, I bought a \$70 Contractor Bench Seat Console (Automotive Accessories Connection, 888/425-2885, autoaccessconnect.stores.yahoo.net) and installed it between the two seats (1). A wood shim underneath keeps it level so my coffee doesn't spill. The console's

cover opens toward the dash, exposing a clipboard mounted on the underside; this is where I keep the homemade form on which I record my daily activities for billing and job-costing purposes. To the top of the cover, I've taped a 5x7 pad for jotting notes during phone calls.

Second, I made a plywood organizer — two shelves, about 18 inches wide and 12 inches deep — and placed it above the console (2); it attaches to the back of the cab with Velcro. In the bottom shelf I keep a street map and my clipboard with job schedules; in the top one I store miscellaneous paperwork to be filed, plus a package or two of cookies.

I also mounted a 400-watt inverter (Vector, 800/544-6986, www.vectormfg.com) under the dash for charging my cellphone, computer, and cameras (3). Above it I keep a Norelco razor so I can give myself a quick shave before client appointments.

Now, if I could just figure out how to swap my bench seat for a Barcalounger, I'd be set.

Sonny Lykos owns Construction Solutions Systems in Naples, Fla.



All-Weather Blueprints

by Jeremy Hess



After watching too many sets of plans get ruined by daily job-site use, I resolved to find an affordable way to keep my prints clean and in good shape throughout an entire project.

For my first attempt, I put each print between two 1/8-inch-thick pieces of Plexiglas screwed together with binder posts purchased at a hardware store. This worked fine for prints that hang on the wall or stay at the job at all times — but lugging around two or three 18-by-24-inch Plexiglas sandwiches proved to be annoying.

Next, I decided to try getting the plans laminated. It worked! I no longer have to dive across the floor to save the prints when it gets windy or starts to rain. I pay my local office-supply store

\$4 a page to laminate 18x24 prints — a price that compares favorably with the \$4 per page the local OfficeMax charges for duplicating.

I keep the laminated plans rolled up when they're in storage, so they lie flat when they're unrolled. Spilled coffee wipes right off. And they make nice placements at lunchtime.

The downside is that I can't make changes to the drawings. For that, I keep another set rolled up in a protective cover, along with any other rough sketches I may have made.

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