

On the Job

Avoiding Plaster Disaster

by Jeff Lingham

I recently had to cut two double-hung windows into a blank elevation in an old house (circa 1870) that had horsehair plaster and wood lath on the interior walls. To hold the plaster together during the cutting and banging, I first marked the rough opening on the interior wall with pencil. I then covered the plaster with Carpet Shield — that sticky-backed plastic stuff — keeping it inside the limits of the interior casing so I wouldn't cause the surrounding paint to peel off.

Next, I went outside and with a circular saw and a reciprocating saw cut gaps in the studs to accept the header and sill frame (1). After nailing off the new framing, I drilled pilot holes through to the inside at the four corners so I'd know where to cut the plaster. Back inside, I marked the R.O. on the plastic (2), then cut through both plastic and plaster with a circular saw. A helper outside grabbed hold of the studs during the cutting and was able to lift the whole rectangle of plaster, lath, and studs out and to the ground in one piece (3, 4).

It worked great! The plaster stayed together, I ended up with a clean cut on the inside, and using a shop vac on the circular saw kept dust to a minimum inside the home. I didn't even have to hire a plasterer to patch the wall.

Jeff Lingham is a carpenter in Ashland, Mass.



A Floating Sink

by Chris Kennel

For this project, the homeowner — an avid orchid grower — had us build a special room to house his plants. The new space includes a heavy soapstone sink, which despite its obvious weight seems suspended in the corner (1).

What you can't see is a steel support structure, which I welded out of 4-by-4-by-1/4-inch steel tubing and a piece of 4-by-4-by-1/4-inch angle (2). On the right side, this frame is bolted to the studs. On the left side, the tubing passes through the wall and is anchored to the

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attic framing so that the weight of the sink applies an upward force to a valley rafter (3).

We tested the support by putting four carpenters on it. It remained rigid, so we were confident it could carry the 300-pound sink.

Chris Kennel works for City Side Remodeling in Denver.



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