

Products | by Tom O'Brien

Framing Fixer. The next time the plumber goes berserk with a Sawzall, it might not take so long to repair the damage. *CTS218 Compression and Tension Straps* are designed to reinforce compromised plates, studs, and even trusses. According to Simpson, the 14-gauge straps can resist both compression and tension (though several may be needed), and they can span gaps up to 4½ inches wide while still fitting on the narrow face of 2-by-lumber. Each 18-inch-by-1½-inch strap costs about \$4.

Simpson Strong-Tie Co., 800/999-5099, strongtie.com.



Durable Footer Form.

Cardboard forms work fine as long as it doesn't rain before the concrete arrives. *Bigfoot Tube 8* is a 4-foot-long 8-inch-diameter tapered cone made from recycled high-density polyethylene. It consists of four nestable sections that collapse into a 12-inch-tall package for easy transport or storage. A plastic top keeps out dirt and moisture. The tube is compatible with all Bigfoot concrete footers and costs about \$10.

Bigfoot Systems, 800/934-0393, bigfootsystems.com.

Solar Helper. The company best known for its lineup of solar-powered attic fans now offers a way to expel hot air even after the sun goes down. The *Solar Controller* powers a fan for eight minutes every half-hour until the temperature drops below 80°F or the humidity goes below 75 percent. The maker says it plugs into a standard 110-volt receptacle and requires only \$5 of extra electricity a year. It sells for \$100.

U.S. Sunlight Corp., 866/446-0966, ussunlight.com.



Nonslip Floor Cover. *Cover Guard Floor Protection* is a flame-retardant polyethylene sheet embossed with a diamond-plate pattern to prevent slippage. The waterproof antistatic membrane cuts easily with scissors or a sharp knife, says the maker, and is sold in 3- and 6-foot rolls, in thicknesses from 10 mil (for 20 cents per square foot) to 40 mil (90 cents per square foot). The company also makes products that protect carpets, walls, and other surfaces.

Bainbridge International, 781/821-2600, coverguard.com.

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Versatile Trim. *TruWood Reversible Trim* is a composite exterior-grade product manufactured from residual wood fibers using no urea-formaldehyde resins, the maker says. The preprimed material features a textured side — intended to resemble rough cedar — and a smooth side. It's sold in 4/4 and 5/4 thicknesses, and in nominal widths from 2 to 12 inches. It costs about \$1.50 per square foot.

The Collins Companies,
800/329-1219,
collinsco.com.



Quick Charge. Eaton Corp., which makes charging systems for commercial electric-powered vehicles, now offers a line of chargers for residential applications. The *Level 2 Pow-R-Station* is NEMA 3R-rated for indoor or outdoor use and can be either wall-mounted or installed as a freestanding pedestal. Sold in 16A, 30A, and 70A versions, the station is designed to be compatible with future “smart grid” technology. The 16A model costs about \$2,000.

Eaton Corp., 800/386-1911,
eaton.com.

Easy Cure for Clogs. Instead of plunging, snaking, or pouring harsh chemicals down a stopped-up drain, how about just turning a dial? The *No Clog Drain* replaces a conventional P-trap with a device that generates turbulence to prevent buildup of debris. If a stoppage occurs anyway, an integral wiper operated by a dial sweeps away the blockage. This setup also makes it easy to retrieve lost valuables, the maker says. The drain costs about \$20.



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PF Waterworks,
877/265-9777,
pfwaterworks.com.



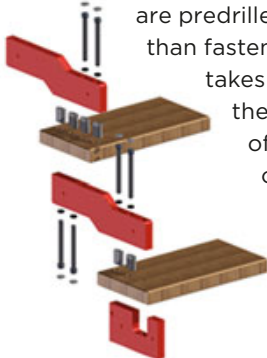
Waterproof Cabinet. All it takes is one leaky pipe to turn a shiny new sink base cabinet into a pulpy mess. That's why only the face frame and door panel of Merillat's *CoreGuard Sink Base* are wood — the rest of the carcass is made of a water-resistant polymer. To make spills easier to clean, the shelves feature raised ribs and a slight forward tilt. Prices for kitchen cabinets start at \$930; bathroom vanities are also available.

Merillat, 866/756-2790, merillat.com.

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Modular Stairs. Instead of a one-piece stringer, an *Ascendings* modular staircase has individual CNC-machined aluminum “risers.” Since the risers and treads are predrilled, installation entails little more than fastening eight bolts per step and takes only three to eight hours, says the maker. Treads can be made of wood, metal, lightweight concrete, or glass. A complete staircase costs between \$3,000 and \$4,000 per step, depending on the finish options.



Ascendings, 812/342-0809, ascendings.com.

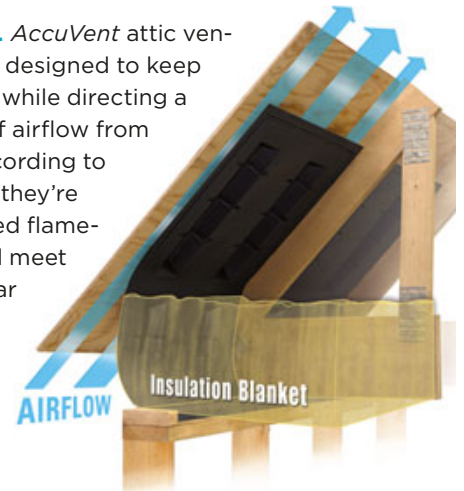
Premium Vinyl. *Urban Luxury Vinyl Flooring* comes in 6-inch-by-36-inch planks that mimic the look of natural wood and in three tile sizes (12, 16, and 18 inches square) that resemble real stone. According to the maker, a rigid UV coating helps the product stand up



to wear and tear better than competing vinyl flooring. Installation requires tile adhesive and a 100-pound roller. Planks cost about \$1 per square foot and tiles \$1.20 per square foot.

California Flooring Express, 951/738-9301, urbanluxuryvinyl.com.

Soffit Baffles. *AccuVent* attic ventilation baffles are designed to keep insulation in place while directing a constant stream of airflow from soffit to ridge. According to the manufacturer, they're made from recycled flame-retardant PVC and meet the new EnergyStar Thermal Bypass Checklist requirements. They're sold in various sizes for both traditional and cathedral ceilings; prices start at about \$1 per piece.



Brentwood Industries, 610/376-1900, brentwoodindustries.com.



Faster Through-Bolt. If you're still using a socket wrench to fasten posts or beams, you might want to check out the *ThruLok Screw Bolt Fastening System*. According to the maker, you don't even have to predrill: Simply drive the ThruLok fastener (using an 18-volt drill) until the point protrudes from the other side, thread the nut onto the point, and tighten with the drill. Fasteners come in 6 1/4-, 7-, and 8-inch lengths. A 24-piece box with a driver bit and extra washers costs \$76.

FastenMaster, 800/518-3569, fastenmaster.com.