

Products | by Tom O'Brien

No-Fuss Fire Tape.

Flame Fighter is a self-adhesive fire tape that needs no joint compound to make unfinished walls code-compliant. The maker says it satisfies IRC requirements (Section R321.1) for one-hour fire-rated assemblies using wood or steel framing and meets Canadian standards for two-hour walls. The tape is meant for sealing tight joints (1/4 inch maximum) on wall surfaces only — it's not rated for ceilings. A 250-foot roll (with a plastic applicator knife included) costs \$23.



EZ-Taping System, 800/721-8273, e-ztape.com.

Efficient Comfort.

According to Triangle Tube, the *Prestige Solo Condensing Boiler* is one of the most efficient and environmentally friendly heating systems on the market. Its stainless steel heat exchanger operates at up to 96 percent efficiency, and when demand is low the boiler adjusts its firing rate to 25 percent of its rated input, resulting in fewer on/off cycles. It comes in five sizes with outputs ranging from 60,000 to 399,000 Btu per hour. The most popular Solo 110 model (110,000 Btu) costs about \$3,600.



Triangle Tube, 856/228-8881, triangletube.com.

Insulated Skylights. Aerogel is an ultra-efficient translucent insulator that's been used in commercial skylights since 2003. Now it's available for the residential market. According to the maker, Wasco skylights with *Lumira Aerogel* deliver more than twice the thermal performance of a typical insulated glass skylight and reduce sound transmission while providing full-spectrum diffused light. Lumira Aerogel is available as an option on all of Wasco's skylights in the E-Class, Curb-Mount, and Architectural Series. Prices for the treated skylights start at about \$250.



Wasco Products, 800/388-0293, wascoskylights.com.



Removable Glue. Armstrong's *S-289 Releasable Sheet Floor Adhesive* is a water-based low-VOC formulation designed to make residential vinyl-backed flooring easier to install and repair. According to the maker, it prevents newly installed flooring from shifting without interfering with adjustments; if the flooring ever needs to be patched or removed, the adhesive won't pull off the backing or mar the substrate. It comes in 1- and 4-gallon pails and costs about \$60 per gallon.

Armstrong World Industries, 877/276-7876, armstrong.com.

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Minimalist Receptacles. If you can't stand the sight of cover plates, consider Bocci's *22 Series Wall Accessories*. You fasten the mounting plate to a standard junction box and then cover it with joint compound, leaving an open circle (or two open circles) in the center. After the mud is dry, you snap a modular duplex receptacle — electrical, telephone, data, or CATV — into the opening. All components are UL-approved and come in white only. Switches should be available by the end of 2011. Duplex cover plates and 15A receptacles come in boxes of 10 for \$750.

Bocci, 604/639-5184, bocci.ca.



Shower-Safe Radiant Heating.

WarmWire floor heat cable makes it easy to incorporate radiant heat into a kitchen or bath: You simply tape cable straps to each side of the subfloor, weave the cable between the straps, and cover with a cement-based or gypsum-based mortar. The cable can be installed in spaces as small as a powder room and is approved for use in showers; a stainless steel jacket and clear urethane outer layer protect against punctures and moisture intrusion. It costs about \$8 per square foot.

Watts SunTouch, 888/432-8932, suntouch.com.



Upgrade for Old Windows. Instead of replacing a sound single-pane window, consider adding *Solar Gard Silver AG 50 Low-E Window Film*. During the winter months, AG 50 reflects 63 percent of interior heat back into a room, the maker claims. And during the summer, it prevents solar heat gain and blocks 99 percent of UVA and UVB rays. It's available clear or in a variety of tints. Installed costs range from \$6 to \$14 per square foot.

Bekaert Specialty Films, 877/273-4364, solargard.com.



Multitasking Toilet.

The *Profile Smart Toilet* conserves space as well as water, says the manufacturer. Intake water runs through a top-mounted faucet (for hand-washing) before flowing down the sink drain to fill up the tank. Two models are available: the standard-sized Profile Smart 305 and — for universal design applications — the Profile Smart 270, with an elevated (17-inch-high) elongated seat.

Both are sold in white only and offer dual-flush (1.28 or 0.8 gpf) capability. They cost \$800.

Caroma USA, 800/605-4218, caromausa.com.

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Economical LEDs. Switch Bulb Co. says its new LED replacement bulbs combine the color and dimmability of incandescents with the efficiency and longevity of LEDs at an affordable price — \$20 per bulb. Current choices include 40W, 60W, 75W, and 100W equivalents, all available in neutral or warm white. The company also claims that the bulbs are 100 percent recyclable.

Switch Bulb Co., 650/249-6800, switchlightbulbs.com.



Wooden Tiles. *Fortis Arbor Wood Mosaics* are hand-cut from scraps of bamboo, teak, and rosewood left over from furniture-making. They're 1/4 inch thick and either 1 inch by 1 inch or 1 inch by 2 inches. The mosaics are prefinished and intended for interior spaces with limited water exposure. The company also sells edge liners and circular inserts, and a grout designed to move with the natural expansion and contraction of the wood. Tile prices range from \$37 to \$45 per square foot.

Flux Studios, 773/883-2030, fluxstudios.com.

Dryer Fan. With the *Dryer Duct Booster* you can set up a laundry room almost anywhere in the house without worrying about the length of the exhaust run or the number of bends. It can be installed horizontally or vertically and maintains proper exhaust velocity in duct runs as long as 100 feet. Unlike competing fans, this one features a blower wheel designed to repel lint and remain clog-free, says the manufacturer. It comes with a five-year no-clog no-maintenance guarantee and costs about \$275.

Tjernlund Products, 800/255-4208, tjernlund.com.



Recycled Glass Tile. Fireclay's *Crush 100% Recycled Glass Tile* is made from raw waste glass that's been crushed, reprocessed, and fired. According to the company, all the glass comes from within 20 miles of its San Jose, Calif., factory, and the manufacturing process consumes less than one-quarter of the energy it takes to make traditional cast-glass tile. The tile is suitable for both horizontal and vertical surfaces, indoors or out. It's sold in 40 colors, 17 sizes, and two finishes (gloss and matte). Prices start at \$28 per square foot.

Fireclay Tile, 408/275-1182, fireclaytile.com.