

Q&A

Q. Lumpy Setting Compounds

When we're working with what we call "hot mud"— setting-type drywall compounds that come in powdered form — it seems almost impossible to mix the stuff up without getting lumps. Do you have any suggestions for smoothing out the consistency?



To mix small amounts of setting compound, use a tapping knife (above) or a drill-mounted eggbeater (right).



A. *Myron Ferguson, a drywall contractor in Broadalbin, N.Y., responds:* A setting compound is similar to a plaster product — the fresher the product and the cleaner the water and the mixing container, the more consistent the final mixture will be. Powder stored in

bags that have been open and exposed to high humidity tends to clump together, which can lead to a lumpy mix. Mixing with very cold water can also lead to lumps, I've found.

For best results, start with fresh compound that's at room temperature, and add it slowly to water that's also at room temperature. Always add the compound to the water — rather than the other way around — and start with a thin mix, then add compound a little at a time until you've reached the proper consistency. Let it slake for a minute or so, then remix before using.

For small batches, I just mix the compound in a pan with a small tapping knife. A small mixer (used for mixing cakes) chucked into a drill works great for mixing small batches, too (see photos).

Q. Gluing Exterior Trim

When installing stained vertical cedar siding or fascia trim, what type of glue should be used for splices and corners? Some contractors like to dab a little stain on the cut ends of 3-degree splices or on 4-degree corner miters, but is there an exterior glue that will adhere in the presence of an oil-based stain?

A. *Jeff Pitcher, vice president of CP Industries, a manufacturer and distributor of adhesives for the wood-products industry, responds:* If not for the stain, any exterior wood glue or exterior-grade adhesive would work fine in this application. But oil-based stains could potentially

interfere with the glue line, a problem you could avoid by not using any stain on the gluing surfaces. If that isn't possible, use either a solvent-based construction adhesive, such as PL 400 (Henkel, 800/999-8920, www.stickwithpl.com) or a polyurethane-based construction adhesive, such as Chem-Calk (Bostik, 888/603-8558, www.bostik-us.com).

Avoid the temptation to use a reactive polyurethane glue like Gorilla Glue (800/966-3458, www.gorillaglu.com). While it's true that this

GOT A QUESTION?

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type of adhesive can provide a sturdy glue joint in the presence of surface contaminants, its curing process causes it to foam. Because you won't be able to apply adequate clamping pres-

sure until the glue cures (nails alone probably wouldn't suffice), the joints would end up with unattractive, excessively foamy glue lines.

Q. Lumber for Permanent Wood Foundations

Is ACQ-treated lumber and plywood suitable for building permanent wood foundations?

A. *Merritt Kline, a product support specialist with APA/The Engineered Wood Association and the Southern Forest Products Association, and Bob Clark, an engineered wood specialist with APA, respond:* According to the American Wood Preservers' Association (www.awpa.com), recommended preservatives for plywood and southern pine lumber intended for use in the construction of permanent wood foundations (PWFs) include .60 alkaline copper quat — types C and D (ACQ-C and ACQ-D) — and .31 copper azole — type B (CA-B) — in addition to .60 chromated copper arsenate (CCA).

Unfortunately, the Southern Pine Council's *Permanent Wood Foundation Design & Construction Guide* (which can be downloaded at newstore.southernpine.com/cgi-bin/newsopine/product?;32) does not address this new generation of waterborne treatments. However, there's no reason to believe that fundamental design and detail recommendations would be different for ACQ- or CA-B-treated wood, other than the need for additional

corrosion protection; that requirement can be satisfied by using hot-dip-galvanized fasteners that meet ASTM A153 specifications and connectors that meet ASTM A653 Class G185 specifications.

Although the Southern Pine Council and APA/The Engineered Wood Association no longer provide technical support for PWFs, the American Wood Council (www.awc.org) is in the final stages of reviewing a new PWF design guide. Our understanding is that the guide was developed through a consensus process, which will make it eligible for adoption as a building code reference standard.

By the way, in case you wondered, even though the EPA has prohibited the use of CCA for most residential applications — such as play structures and decks — since January 2004, the agency continues to authorize .60 CCA-treated softwood lumber and plywood in residential and light-commercial wood foundations.

Q. Repainting Aluminum Siding

Does faded aluminum siding with a chalklike residue on the surface require any special preparation before repainting?

A. *Jon Tobey, a painting contractor in Monroe, Wash., responds:* Most of the time, a pressure washing with detergent solution is adequate for removing chalking and dirt from aluminum siding. Kill any mildew that's present with a 3-to-1 water-bleach mixture before washing.

If there is some water-activated staining that won't wash off, lightly fog the siding (at the rate of about 3 gallons per house) with a quick-drying alkyd primer. If you're brushing, you can buy aerosol cans of the primer and spray the stains with a very light coat (one you can

still see the stains through). In rare cases, there may be some bare aluminum; if so, I'd try to find out why the paint is peeling. But in general, aluminum doesn't require any primer, as latex adheres tenaciously to the metal.

Then the siding can be painted with a high-quality 100 percent acrylic paint by brush or roller, or by spraying. I've had good success with Sherwin-Williams' SuperPaint; aluminum siding that I painted 10 years ago with this product still looks good.

Q. Does Drenched Insulation Dry Out?

A winter's worth of rain fell on a large hillside home we're building before we could complete the roof. Though we tarped the project, rainwater seeped through the first-floor decking and into the floor framing of a basement wine cellar. I suspect that the fiberglass insulation we used to insulate the wine cellar's I-joint floor system is wet, if not saturated — but inspecting the joist bays and removing the insulation would involve cutting through the OSB subfloor or rim joists, since the floor is framed on top of the cellar slab. Now that the roof is completed, is it necessary to remove the wet fiberglass insulation and dry out the cavities, or will this wet assembly dry naturally without any intervention?

A. *Paul Fiset, director of Building Materials and Wood Technology at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and a JLC contributing editor, responds:* I would be concerned about the moisture trapped in the floor system and would take active steps to dry things out. When there are very low rates of air exchange, the pri-

mary drying mechanism is diffusion, which is pretty slow, particularly with relatively impermeable materials like OSB or plywood decking capping the floor system. Furthermore, not only is the wet fiberglass loading the joist bays with moisture, but so is the recently poured concrete slab — and it will continue to do so until the concrete fully cures.

Although the floor system will eventually dry out, there is considerable potential for mold and mildew growth in the meantime. Also, the OSB web material in the I-joists could swell irreversibly, possibly compromising the critical web-flange connections. Whether you go in through the top (through the OSB) or through the side (through the rim joist), the time and labor involved in drying out those wet cavities strikes me as cheap insurance compared with the potential costs if you don't.