

Reader Feedback

The following excerpts are taken from comments in response to the JLC articles referenced.

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Letters

Q&A: “WALKING ON ATTIC CELLULOSE,” BY MICHAEL UNIACKE (NOV/12)

hndymn (online, 4/5/15): A good tool for smoothing compressed cellulose as you leave an attic is a toy rake duct-taped to a long length of ¾-inch quarter round or a similar long, lightweight piece of wood. The ¾-inch molding is plenty ridged at 10 feet long. Just remember to ask for your child’s permission to use the rake.

“PRE-HANGING EXTERIOR DOORS,” BY GREG BURNET (ONLINE, 3/4/15)

Jason Laws (online, 3/22/15): For me, if it is a wash cost-wise, then I don’t think many of my current customers (or future ones) would go for it. I totally agree with your points. But many people in my area tend to prebuy everything because they “got a good deal,” and just have me install it. Or, they want to control the cost of everything.

Almost everything that I do is pre-hung. The only time that I can remember doing custom doors was when I built portable sheds and cabins. But they were almost always the same and I could build them production-style. And for me, driving around with most of my tools all the time, I need to have things delivered—no room at all for a door.

I agree that the skill set of the carpenter is getting smaller all the time, and it would be nice to build more things from scratch. Using pre-hung everything and trusses doesn’t make you think enough.

“LUMBER LIQUIDATORS IN MORE HOT WATER,” BY JEFFERSON KOLLE (ONLINE, 4/10/15)

Nathan Hertel (online, 4/12/15): I really doubt there’s much of a health risk to using these floors—if you’re replacing 20-year-old carpet with cheap Lumber Liquidator’s engineered wood, I doubt the formaldehyde in the new floors poses health risks close to the carpet you’re tearing up. If you’re ultraconcerned about microscopic levels of emissions and products from China, why are you purchasing flooring from Lumber Liquidators? Don’t go to the Kia lot and expect to get Lexus products. And shame on the people working hard to ensure that families of more-limited means need to pay more for their flooring.

Kingflynn (online, 4/12/15): Maybe so, but I wouldn’t put this in the room where my kid sleeps in a million years.

“WHAT WILL OSHA’S SILICA RULE COST?” BY CLAYTON DEKORNE (ONLINE, 4/3/15)

Endo Alley (online, 4/6/15): Most drywall compounds do not have silica listed as an ingredient. So why is it considered silica by the law? I understand it is important to wear proper safety equipment even around dust from drywall mud. But is it really as dangerous as silica is claimed to be?

Clayton DeKorne responds: Don’t rely on what you read on the side of the bucket or the bag. Building-material labeling laws (at least on packaging) are not necessarily like food labeling laws. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), drywall joint compounds are made from several ingredients, such as talc, calcite, mica, gypsum, and, yes, silica, that may be associated with varying degrees of eye, nose, throat, and respiratory-tract irritation.

You can verify that most joint compounds contain silica by looking not at the packaging but at the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) that manufacturers are required by OSHA to provide (these are typically available online). You will find there explicit language about silica: “This product contains quartz (crystalline silica) as a naturally occurring contaminant. Chronic exposure to crystalline silica in the respirable size has been shown to cause silicosis, a debilitating lung disease ...” (taken from the MSDS for National Gypsum’s Ready Mix Joint Compounds).

These safety sheets (which you should be downloading and filing into each job folder as a matter of due diligence) not only list all harmful ingredients but describe basic measures for workers’ personal protection—the primary one being respiratory protection. But as you can imagine with such a legal document, manufacturers do not spare mention of any ingredient that might cause any conceivable harm, and the document includes every conceivable protective measure you might need, including gloves and safety glasses. The MSDS is, after all, a document that could be used in litigation to spare manufacturers from liability as much as it is a document to guide worker protection.

Mr. Common Sense (online, 4/12/15): This article inspired me to do a bit of research and I was surprised at the health effects of some particulate dust such as silica, which leads to silicosis. Common sense directs me to wear protective gear in some situations and I for one do not need the government to direct me by law. I

just wish all employers would follow common sense.

“FIRE PROTECTION FOR LIGHT-WOOD FRAMING,” BY CLAYTON DEKORNE (ONLINE, 4/10/15)

dzbeta (online, 4/15/15): Lots of approaches for fire-resistant framing offered here. However, all could be simplified if apartments were designed and built with cold-formed steel framing instead.

Clayton DeKorne responds: Not exactly. While it’s true that steel framing will not ignite and doesn’t add fuel to a fire, it will melt fairly easily in a roaring fire, so fire-rated assemblies allowed by code for steel framing don’t look that much different from assemblies that use wood. See page 81 of “A Guide to Fire and Acoustic Data For Cold-Formed Steel Floor, Wall & Roof Assemblies” (Steel Framing Alliance; steelframing.org). A 1-hour fire-rated steel-framed wall can be simplified a little—you don’t need the resilient channel—but you do still need to cover both sides with ½-inch Type-X drywall. A 2-hour fire wall can’t be simplified; it still needs two layers of Type-X on both sides.

“WOOD SHINGLE ROOF,” BY MATT RISINGER (ONLINE, 2/25/15)

Charles Gravel (online, 6/2/15): In the second picture there are quite a few shingles that are almost stacking. Don’t codes want at least a ¾- to 1-inch minimum offset? Other than that, it looks very nice.

Mike Guertin (online, 6/12/15): I second Charles’ comment. Several photos show shingles with joint offsets that are much too close. The IRC and the Cedar Shingle and Shake Bureau (CSSB) are specific regarding wood-shingle joint offset on roofs. Joints between shingles must be at least 1 ½ inches through two successive courses (see 2015 IRC R905.7.5 “Application”). The joint offset has been in the code and CSSB for at least 15 years. And the shingle manufacturer’s instructions align with code and the CSSB (see Fire Smart Roofing’s “Application Instructions for Cedar Shingles”). It’s a tough standard to meet, as shingle widths have become narrower and installers must

be conscientious to get the offsets right.

It’s unfortunate that *JLC* titled the email newsletter that featured this article “Best-Practice Wood Shingles” when the shingle installation shown doesn’t even come close to code minimum.

Matt points out the importance of using stainless steel fasteners. He used 304 stainless—an appropriate choice for Austin, Texas, according to the manufacturer’s rec-

ommendations. However the IRC and CSSB instructions have changed over the last few years and now require all fire-retardant-treated and pressure-treated shingles to be installed using 316 stainless fasteners. And 316 stainless fasteners must be used to install wood shingles or shakes on any roof within 15 miles of salt water. Here in Rhode Island, that provision would apply to well over half of the entire state.

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