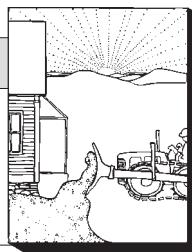


John's Toolbox

by David Dobbs



Maybe you can take it with you. John Toftum always does. The New London, Wis., builder/remodeler packs a small warehouse's worth of tools and equipment into the box of a 6-ton Iveco Z-110 cube van. The

van holds everything he needs for any of his typical jobs, all organized according to frequency of use.

Toftum got interested in "vehicle organization," as he calls it, when he was a lead finish carpenter for his last employer. He didn't have the big truck then, but even his pickup toolbox was known for its organization, with each thing having its place. Sometimes other carpenters, unable to find their own tools, would ask to borrow his, saying, "I know where yours is."

Such organization doesn't happen overnight, Toftum stresses. "Thought and planning are

required," he explains, "because each tool must be accessible, placed in order of frequency of use, and situated to ride safely without damaging other tools or falling on the floor."

Those tools used most often are placed near the rear overhead door. Each circular saw rests flat on a shelf, with a space routed for blade and blade guard. Each drill, sander, planer, and router has a custom-made spot designed to hold it steady during transit. Since the tools aren't fastened down, they can be quickly removed or replaced.

Extra lighting aids tool location, though Toftum says he knows the truck so well he can find most things in the dark. Knowing the layout well has another benefit — if something is missing, he notices its empty spot at a glance.

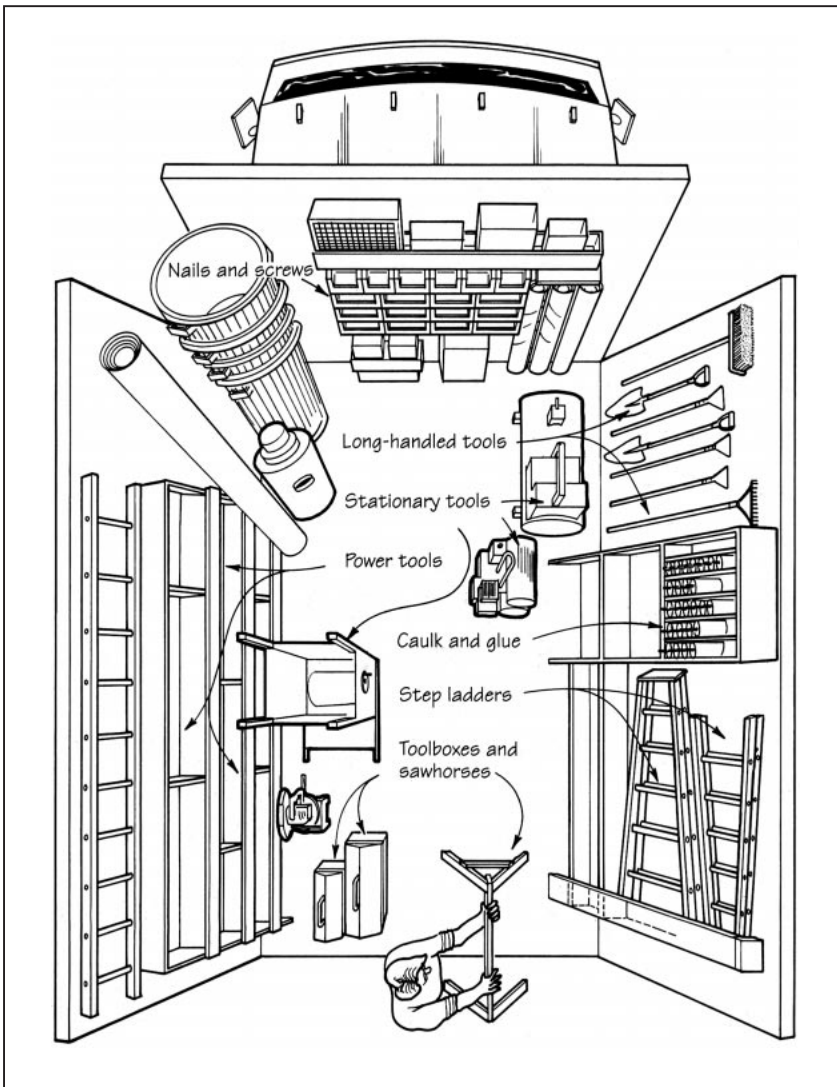
Toftum hasn't overlooked the cab. Blueprints, statements, proposal forms, clipboard, measuring tape, flashlight, and paper towels have

their own spots within arm's reach. A cellular phone helps Toftum make the most of travel time.

This is the fifth truck Toftum has organized; to date he has made 15 pages of plans and drawings for the Iveco as he's added new compartments, hooks, and shelves. Future plans include large metal boxes located below the van body for things like jacks, chains, cables, booster cables, and gas cans. He also wants to build a collapsible cart for wheeling tools to the work site.

Toftum has a set of lists on the inside of the truck to specify what tools he needs for a given type of job. That way he can just pull everything on the list, take it in, and lock the truck.

"I sometimes feel silly consulting a list to tell me what tools to take in," he says. "But unless you have never gone back to your truck for some tool that you didn't think of, don't laugh." ■



John's Toolbox Holds: 39 electric tools; 63 kinds of nails; 20 kinds of hollow wall and concrete fasteners; 33 different kinds of screws and bolts; 600 feet of extension cords; 10 ladders; 150 feet of air hose; 10 pneumatic nail/staple guns; 10 assorted shovels, rakes, and brooms; 60 tubes of caulk and glue; a 5,000-watt generator; 4 sawhorses; various wrenches, clamps, tarps, jacks, chains, cables, and lights.



Nails and screws rest in open bins at the truck's front, clearly labeled, so nail bags can be quickly loaded or unloaded.



Long-handed tools are toward the front of the truck on the right side. Caulks and glue tubes are easily accessible from a custom-made rack.



Power tools are shelved on the left side of the truck, near the rear for easy access. Custom-cut shelves brace the tools against motion.