

LETTERS



The Cost of Exhaust

To the Editor:

It was very surprising to find no mention of "air exchanger" systems in Andrew Shapiro's article "Simple Whole-House Ventilation" (8/95). These systems bring in fresh air and exhaust stale air through a small heat exchanger that can reclaim up to 80% of the energy of the exhausted conditioned air. These systems are quite common in Canada, and are now being offered by U.S. manufacturers as well. Their use controls condensation on window surfaces and reduces "sick building syndrome" problems (as would Shapiro's system), but with a much lower energy penalty.

Carl Mezoff, AIA
Stamford, Conn.

Andrew Shapiro responds:

It's true that a heat recovery ventilator (HRV) is the best mechanical ventilation system: Not only does it save energy, but it provides balanced ventilation (the house is not depressurized as it is with an exhaust-only system) and delivers more even ventilation throughout the house. The reason we don't install more HRVs is the cost: Installed systems for single-family homes typically start at around \$2,500 and go up from there.

It's very important to install ventilation in all new homes, as well as in existing homes that have been tightened up. An exhaust-only system like the one described in the article is an affordable alternative for homeowners who can't afford an HRV.

Ed. note: For more on HRVs, see the article "Heat-Recovery Ventilators" in the March '95 issue of JLC.

Ounce of Prevention

To the Editor:

It always brightens my day once each month when I find your magazine in my in-basket. I must say that I

cringed when I picked up the September 1995 issue and saw its cover: a carpenter working over a marble countertop and glass cooktop with no protection on the surfaces, laying tools directly on the counter, and carrying a roughing hammer (straight claws) around inside the house in a tool pouch. These are all serious no-no's in our company.

Maybe we work for some finicky clients, but one missed step or inadvertent slip of the fingers and we would be repolishing the marble or paying for a new glass element. The man in your picture may be the most gentle, coordinated person in the world but please, let's not forget the old "ounce of prevention, pound of cure" concept.

Geoffrey O. Perkins
The Perkins Construction Company
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Architects Happy to Cooperate

To the Editor:

As an architect, I would like to take exception to the statement "If the plans give a dimension for the stairwell opening, ignore it," in the article "Layout Tricks for Rough Framing" (7/95). As a design professional, I pride myself on preparing both realistic and buildable plans. That sort of approach among builders in the use of construction drawings — indiscriminately making changes — often leads to mistakes and compromises the intent of the design and the structure to be erected. Relationships supported by dimensions, details, and material selections are usually deliberate and well thought out by the designer. Carpenters and other tradespeople who do not (or cannot) take the time to understand the underlying intent may, as a result, produce a product that is significantly different from the resolved design.

Most architects are happy to cooperate with the various trades to allow changes that will make the work quicker and more cost efficient; however, a disregard for the prepared plans will always lead to job site conflict, which is not an efficient use of time for anybody. Mutual respect for each others' work benefits all parties involved.

Paul K. Shrem, Architect
Livonia, Mich.

Curious About Steel Framing

To the Editor:

I find something very curious in the steel industry's current efforts to promote steel as an alternative to wood products in residential construction. It seems to me that most of their efforts have been focused on the use of steel studs. I would think that the real place for their products would be in replacing floor joists and rafters, and in other areas where long lengths of scarce dimensional lumber are used.

Also, I would think that truss rafter manufacturers and modular housing companies would be jumping on the steel bandwagon if this material is all that it is cracked up to be.

Richard Elsbree
Sayre, Pa.



Keep 'em coming! Letters must be signed and include the writer's address. The *Journal of Light Construction* reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail letters to JLC, RR 2, Box 146, Richmond, VT 05477; or e-mail to 76176.2053@compuserve.com.