

Letters

Better Marketing Needed for Energy Savings

To the Editor:

The article "Simple Changes Yield Big Energy Savings" (*Notebook*, 7/01) describes simple measures that added a net cost of \$600 to construction but saved \$358 in energy costs the following year. That is a return on investment of 58%, tax free! Is there any other investment on the planet that can provide a return like this, year after year?

To my utter amazement, "...Beazer Homes is not building any more Carbury houses, partly because of a lack of buyer interest...." While I am aware of a general perception among builders that energy conservation isn't "sexy" and "doesn't sell," I have to wonder if the energy feature was properly marketed. I am certain that a segment of the market would jump at the chance for such a payback.

Several initiatives around the country (notably the Energy Star Home Program, but there are others) provide technical support, slick, well-thought-out marketing materials, and connections to independent rating services that validate and lend credibility to energy savings. You can contact Energy Star at 888/782-7937 or www.energystar.gov.

It's hard to imagine a buyer who would not be attracted to a monthly payment that's reduced by a few hundred dollars, or the prospect of getting more home for the same money.

Joe Ponessa
Rutgers Cooperative Extension
New Brunswick, N.J.

Name-Brand Breakers

To the Editor:

I am not an electrical expert by any stretch of the definition, but I do feel qualified to dispute a comment made in *On the House* (8/01). Sean Kenney,

commenting on circuit breaker failure, mentions that he would be "especially suspicious if the breakers were purchased at a home center or hardware store." Perhaps his intention was to say that private-label or generic breakers may be more suspect in breaker failure.

My comment is that the "name-brand" breakers purchased in a home center are the same breakers available from the electrical wholesale suppliers and are no more likely to fail regardless of the geographical location of the purchase. Be a smart shopper but don't be afraid to support locally owned home centers and hardware stores.

Dick Willard
Ellsworth, Maine

Corners From L

To the Editor:

I agree with Paul Fiset's response to the letter concerning the comparative strengths of L-corners and blocked corners (*On the House*, 8/01). However, the L-corner offers little in the way of solid nailing backing for the drywall hanger. Most framers use a minimum of nails in L-corners, and oftentimes they back away from the stud they are nailed to when the drywall hanger nails off the corners. The result is often broken sheetrock and a less than acceptable corner. Perhaps the inspector who found them not to his liking was a former drywall hanger.

Warren Ritchey
via e-mail

Farewell, Friend

To the Editor:

After 51 years and at age 76, I am retiring from my career in the construction industry. I "retired" 20 years ago after 30 years with a large industrial engineering-builder. I then started a historic restoration, general remodeling,

THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

A Hanley-Wood Publication
www.jlconline.com

Editor Don Jackson
Associate Editors Dave Holbrook
Martin Holladay
Jon Vara
Managing Editor Jill Mason
Illustrator Tim Healey
Special Projects Editor Josie Masterson-Glen
Contributing Editors Ted Cushman
Don Dunkley
David Frane
Carl Hagstrom
Joe Stoddard
Webmaster Braddock Bull
Corresponding Editors Michael Byrne
Henri de Marne
Paul Fiset
Columnists Paul Eldrenkamp
Quenda Behler Story

Production Director Theresa A. Emerson
Art Director Barbara Nevins
Graphic Designer Annie Clark
Circulation Director Paul Ruess
Customer Service Manager Angela Packard
Marketing Associate Amy Barcomb

General Manager Steven Bliss
Operations Manager Donna Kaynor
Office Manager George Carpenter

Group Publisher Rick Strachan
Publisher Neil Rouda

President, Magazine Division Peter M. Goldstone
Director, Magazine Operations Ron Kraft



Published by Hanley-Wood, LLC

JLC LIVE CONSTRUCTION TRAINING SHOW

Show Director Rick McConnell
Show Manager Donna Ladd
Sales Manager Tami Svarfvar
Marketing Manager Kevin Spaulding
Conference Manager Sherry Daniels
Construction Events Manager Don Dunkley
Operations Coordinator Katina Billado
Sales Associates Ed Brennan
Don Alter
Administrative Assistant Suzanne Lavallee

CORPORATE

Chief Executive Officer Michael M. Wood
President Frank Anton
Executive Vice President Jack Brannigan
Chief Financial Officer James D. Zielinski
Chief Operating Officer Fred Moses
V.P., Finance John Dovi
V.P., Circulation & Database Dev. Nick Cavnar
V.P., Human Resources Jeff Fix
V.P., Production Joanne Harap
V.P., Marketing Ann Seltz
Business Systems Manager Kari Christianson
Director, Information Technology Aaron Packard



JLC Information Directory

www.jlconline.com

Mailing Address:

The Journal of Light Construction

186 Allen Brook Lane
Williston, VT 05495
802/879-3335

Editorial: We welcome letters and article submissions from readers. Keep copies of all original materials. Contact us by mail at the address above, Attn: JLC Editorial Dept, or via e-mail at jlc-editorial@hanley-wood.com.

Subscriptions: To order a new or renewal subscription, visit our Web site at www.jlconline.com, or call 800/375-5981. For assistance with your current subscription, e-mail us at jlc-cs@hanley-wood.com, call us at 800/375-5981, or write us at The Journal of Light Construction, P.O. Box 420234, Palm Coast, FL 32137. Subscription rates for qualified readers in construction trades: \$39.95/1 year, \$64.95/2 years. Non-qualified readers: \$59.95 per year. Sales tax required on subscriptions to CA (7.25%), DC (5.75%), GA (4%), IL (6.25%), NY (4%), TX (6.25%), VT (5%). Group rates available on request. Back issues/single article requests: \$4.95 each plus \$5 s&h per order.

Reprints: For custom reprints (quantities of 500 or more), call Wilda Fabelo at PARS International Corp., 212/221-9595 ext. 324.

JLC LIVE: For information about attending a JLC LIVE conference or seminar, contact us online at www.jlclive.com or call 800/552-1951 (ext. 132); for exhibitor or sponsor information, call Ed Brennan at 802/244-6257 (ext. 181), Don Alter at 802/496-5670 (ext. 182), or Tami Svarfvar at 802/479-9526 (ext. 184). To request a press pass, call Kevin Spaulding at 802/879-3335 (ext. 133).

JLC Bookstore: Visit our bookstore online at www.jlcbooks.com. You can order from our secure Web site, call us at 800/859-3669, or order by mail at the address above, Attn: JLC Bookstore.

JLC-Update: Subscribe to our monthly e-mail newsletter for residential and light commercial contractors. It's free to JLC readers, and each issue contains industry news and the latest tips on materials, techniques, tools, and technology. Subscribe online at www.jlc-update.com/subscribe.

and construction management company. For the last 16 years, I have been a subscriber and devotee of *The Journal* as a basic guide in all phases of my businesses.

I have loaned copies and given subscriptions to my colleagues and sub-contractors. I can attest to the fact that contractors who regularly used *The Journal* as an administrative and operational tool are among the best I worked with. My entire "library" of issues is going to an up-and-coming construction group.

It is with regret that I am not renewing my subscription, having finally truly retired. Thank you for the years of being my partner in a most successful building business.

Joseph J. Lacks, Owner
Essex Craft Construction
Cincinnati, Ohio

Plywood Standards

To the Editor:

Your article about the thickness of plywood (*Notebook*, 8/01) is a bit lacking with regards to standards. The APA standard, PRP-108, was supplemented by the U.S. Department of Commerce's voluntary product standard PS-1 in 1983, and the 1995 edition of PS-1 eliminated the need to reference PRP-108 altogether.

PS-1 is a consensus standard, developed by the U.S. government with input from producers, distributors, consumers, and users. While tolerances in this and other standards may seem generous to some, they do ensure that everyone selling the product uses the same tolerances. Calling $15/32$ -inch plywood $1/2$ -inch is another story; that is just plain wrong.

Eugene A. Groshonv
via e-mail

More ICF Tips

To the Editor:

I have a few tidbits to add to the article "My First ICF Foundation" (4/01) based on my recent first-time experience using ICFs for a house and garage stemwall project in southern Colorado. The following thoughts address our experience

with techniques, versatility, and costs.

One helper and I built about 500 linear feet of stemwalls over a couple of weeks, averaging 4 to 6 feet high and 8 inches thick. We used Lite-Form, a panel system consisting of 8-inch-high by 8-foot-long by 2-inch-thick Styrofoam sections that clip together with heavy-duty plastic clips into top and bottom slots every 8 inches. Wider clips are also available; only the width of the clips needs to be changed to get the desired wall thickness. We chose this particular ICF system based on availability, price, and the local supplier's willingness to visit our site at least daily to address questions and to keep us stocked with needed materials. He also assisted during the concrete pours, which we performed with the help of a line pump contractor who was familiar with ICFs and had a compatible 3500-psi mix design on file with the concrete supplier. The ICF rep followed the concrete hose as we gradually pumped the forms full in two passes.

Gradually pumping the mix into the forms enabled us to plug and brace minor leaks that did occur at certain stepdowns.... The leaks were easily braced and plugged by the time the second pass came around, and were sufficiently set up to fill up the forms without further problems. The first of our two concrete pours had too liquid a mix, which also caused some leaks; the second pour had just the right slump.

We could have installed twice the amount of bracing ahead of time, but in our situation we were pushed for time and installed what we thought was sufficient bracing with kickers to the ground to keep the forms aligned with string lines, in order to end up with straight walls. In practice, as the walls were filled, the sheer concrete mass leaned the ICFs in the direction of their center of gravity in spite of our earlier bracing. The ICF rep kept a close eye on the forms and helped us to add bracing to push back the walls into alignment with our string lines. This posed no great difficulty, as the "pushes" on the walls were made with one or two helpers, while a third person staked

behind the brace to hold it in place. My only criticism of the system is that ICFs are, in general, not rigid enough to ignore significant bracing. As pointed out in "Using ICFs in Alaska" (*Letters*, 7/01), bracing is the key, and we will pay 1,000% more attention to it next time.

The material cost for the ICFs we used ran around \$2.85 per square foot and amounted to about the same as the cost of the concrete for the job, which in our

area runs about \$93 per yard. On this project, I estimated that we saved around \$1,500 beyond the cost of my "sweat equity" labor cost. We ended up with a strong stemwall that's already insulated below grade on both sides, and with experience that will serve well for the next opportunity.

Robert Hogrefe
Tijeras, N.M.

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*, 186 Allen Brook Ln., Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to jlc@bginet.com.

