

Letters

Shoddy Construction on the Rise?

To the Editor:

I just read your article "Big Builders Face Media Scrutiny" (*Notebook*, 11/01) and disagree with the builders who say homeowners' complaints are "isolated incidents" — a vague term that implies that shoddy construction is rare, which is false.

In our neighborhood alone, people complain verbally to those they know will understand their frustration, but when you ask them to make the complaint official, they back out. The reason isn't that they don't have legitimate complaints; it's because they see the easy way out is to cover up the defects and resell without disclosing, or just fix the defects themselves and cut their losses in order to protect their property value. It's an expensive, stressful battle for a homeowner with a job and family to take on a builder over construction errors.

Builders' statistics on customer satisfaction are slanted and a perfect example of the fox guarding the hen house. Put legislation in place that makes it hard for builders to get away with faulty construction and the true numbers of unhappy homebuyers would be known. ... There needs to be consumer protection with teeth to bring the level of customer service on homes up to the level expected on other products, at the very least. Grassroots organizations such as Homeowners Against Deficient Dwellings and Home Owners for Better Building did not spring up out of nowhere — they were created from necessity as a result of this nation's epidemic of shoddy construction and illusory warranties.

Cindy Schnackel, Okla. representative
Homeowners Against Deficient Dwellings
www.hadd.com
via e-mail

Vinyl Trim Detail

To the Editor:

Regarding the item "Vinyl Trim for Bay Windows" (*On the House*, 10/01), another method I've used successfully, especially where color matching is an issue, is to butt J-channels back to back, then cap them with a piece of color-matched aluminum coil stock. This is similar to a cap-type outside corner post.

Rick Lappin

Product Design/Applications

LP Specialty Products

via e-mail

Remember Glass Replacement When Shopping for Windows

To the Editor:

Regarding the article on clad windows (10/01), I thought you should have addressed glass replacement in the comparisons. After vandals broke 23 Andersen casement windows in a spec home I built, I found that replacement meant I must purchase new sash and glass units to go in the frames. This is because the windows are pinned and glued, with no removable glass stops. Then I had to paint and stain the interior wood sashes to match. The total cost of purchasing the replacements was the same as for the original purchase of the entire window unit. My labor cost was the same as for the original installation.

With a Marvin, Hurd, or Pella, you would simply call the local glass company and have new panes of insulated glass ordered, and the installation is simple and cheap.

Since 1969, I have had to replace about 35 windows in which the wood sash behind the exterior cladding had rotted. Every one was an Andersen clad-vinyl window, both casement and double hung.

We use more Caradco windows than

THE JOURNAL OF LIGHT CONSTRUCTION

A Hanley-Wood Publication
www.jlconline.com

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Published by Hanley-Wood, LLC

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anything else in this area. They are the same as Marvin and Hurd in price and quality.

Allen Gullett
Gullett Construction Co.
Cookeville, Tenn.

Cost of Oil vs. Gas

To the Editor:

The fuel cost comparison in the October issue (*On the House*) answered the reader's question but missed an important point. In order to choose a fuel for a home, you need to look at the overall home energy usage, not just the cost per Btu of the fuels. If you just look at fuel cost, oil typically appears to be the most economical solution. Here in upstate New York, I find most homeowners opt for forced-air heat. When you install an oil-fired furnace, the remaining appliances (water heater, dryer, range) tend to be electric. If propane or natural gas is installed, you can use gas-fired appliances. When you account for the energy cost savings of using gas-fired appliances versus electric ones, the increased heating cost of the gas is significantly offset. Additionally, the yearly maintenance required on an oil-fired system is not incurred.

Michael Zuritis
via e-mail

Durable Dust Curtain

To the Editor:

In the article "Commonsense Lead Safety" (10/01), author Ron Haviland notes, "None of the manufactured barrier wall systems that we've seen looked rugged enough to stand up to long use ... even though they're faster to set up and take down." We are certain Mr. Haviland will find that our dust barrier *will* stand up to prolonged and repeated use — and that it will prove to be more efficient and less expensive than anything he is using currently.

Jeff Whittemore
President, ZipWall
Arlington, Mass.

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