



Of Associations and Codes

Long ago, one Election Day, I took part in an end-of-day tailgate discussion. Bob, the boss, asked the crew if we planned to vote. Ed said, "I never vote."

Bob said, "If you don't vote, you can't complain."

To which Ed replied, "You must vote all the time, Bob."

Though I won't venture an opinion on how many deck builders are regular voters, I will say that I heard a fair amount of complaining at DeckExpo about what seems to be an emerging code interpretation for attaching guardrail posts. The specific recommendations are covered in some depth in the *Question & Answer* department starting on page 34, but the short version is that each post connection would require \$10 to \$15 worth of additional hardware.

To engineers and code guys, this is a cheap way to build a guardrail whose strength is verifiable, and whose long-term performance is predictable. Lots of deck builders, on the other hand, decry the additional cost and question the need for change: They've been doing it their way for years and have never had a failure. Each side has a defensible perspective, and the point of this editor's letter isn't to argue one side or the other of this particular issue, but rather to talk about the disconnect between builders and codes, and to recommend one way that builders can have a say in code writing.

Fifteen years on construction sites taught me that the people wielding the hammers and saws have to buy into code changes, or they will ignore them if they can get away with it. Buy-in starts with education. Many building departments in fact do a good job educating tradespeople about what code changes are. The why, though, is often

left out, leaving builders to wonder why what they did yesterday isn't okay today?

True buy-in also requires inclusion. To many builders, the writing and interpretation of codes is far removed from their day-to-day lives, which feeds an us-against-them mentality. The opportunity to have a voice in code changes comes from membership in trade associations such as the North American Deck and Railing Association (NADRA), the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), or the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). These associations often have representatives on the code-writing boards, and their votes influence code changes.

I confess, I never belonged to any associations when I was a carpenter and a builder. I couldn't see the point in giving them the hundreds of dollars required for dues, and I didn't have the time for chapter meetings. Were I making my living as builder today, however, I would join one of those associations. If you don't vote, you can't complain.

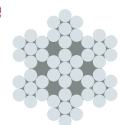
Andy Engel
Editor

Correction: On page 52 of the March/April 2007 issue, the labels on the lower drawing are reversed. 7x7 should be 1x19, and vice versa. We regret the error.

1x19 cable



7x7 cable



Unlike most of the people you know,
we want your two cents.

While it's nice to hear about what we're doing right, it's more interesting to hear about what we're doing wrong. If you saw something you loved or hated, or if you've

got a tip that could help out other readers, we want to know. Send letters or e-mails to the addresses below.

prodeck@hanleywood.com

Professional Deck Builder
186 Allen Brook Lane
Williston, VT 05495