

Letters

Fire Sprinkler Costs Reconsidered

A letter in the March issue (“IRC Sprinkler Rule Misinformed”) suggests that residential fire sprinklers are not worth the expense when considering lives saved. The writer may not be aware of other savings. I have designed commercial buildings in rural areas where the owner also had to install the water lines and water storage tanks for fire protection. I forget the particulars, but recall that for one building of a given size, the Uniform Fire Code required that a “fire flow” of 1,000 gallons per minute had to be sustained for three hours. This meant the site needed 180,000 gallons of water storage in addition to domestic water needs. If the building was sprinklered, though, the fire flow was allowed to be reduced by half — saving the cost of one large water tank.

A friend in the local volunteer fire department told me of a nearby city that requires residential sprinklers. This city saves substantially because it can get by with smaller water mains and water storage tanks, fewer fire hydrants, and possibly smaller, less expensive fire engines and fewer firefighters.

Most fires (the figure I recall is 97 percent) in sprinklered buildings never grow big enough to activate more than a single fire sprinkler. I’m sure that this makes fire-fighting less hazardous for fire personnel. When you factor in these savings, the overall costs for residential fire sprinklers would be less than the writer states.

I would like to see more consideration given to installing sprinklers as part of the domestic water system rather than as a completely separate system. While a hybrid system may not be as good as the separated systems found in commercial projects, it might be adequate for residential use and would reduce installation costs substantially. This is certainly better than having stand-alone sprinklers rejected by municipalities because they are too expensive — then you have no sprinkler system at all.

Thor Matteson, S.E.
Mariposa, Calif.

Epoxy for Wood Rot

In the article “Beating Wood Rot” (2/09), what is the brand of the product that author Tom O’Brien refers to as a “consolidation epoxy”?

Robert Johnson, CGR, CAPS
Johnson Building Co.
Livonia, Mich.

Tom O’Brien responds: A consolidation epoxy is a liquid that’s designed to soak into rot-damaged wood, where it hardens, fortifying the wood fibers and promoting the bond between the wood and the epoxy paste that’s applied next to fill the gaps. Manufacturers that offer consolidation epoxies in their product line include Abatron (abatron.com), Conserv Epoxy (conservepoxy.com), and System Three (systemthree.com).

Not Alone

After reading Tom Sims’ letter about his experience with an Advanta account (“Credit Card Warning,” 4/09), I don’t feel so alone. I too have had an account with Advanta; for quite a few years they had the lowest APR of any credit I was offered. It was low enough that I turned down or — in a few cases — canceled other lines of credit. Then out of the blue, with no late payments or over-limits, my rate went up to 19.9 percent.

I am poorly set to pay this card off in the near future, but in time it will be paid in full and canceled. When I see their ad in your and other publications, I wish I could put out my own ad with a warning of things to come.

Terry Eaton, Builder
Eaton Rapids, Mich.

New Trend for Tool Reviews?

I was very happy to see the country of origin listed for the tools tested in “Plunge-Cutting Circular Saws” (4/09). I hope this will be a continuing trend, as it’s one piece of information I always use in deciding which model to purchase. Maybe there will be a little more pressure on manufacturers to start making quality tools in the United States again.

J.C. Heffner
Apollo, Pa.

KEEP 'EM COMING!

Letters must be signed and include the writer’s address. JLC reserves the right to edit for grammar, length, and clarity. Mail to JLC, 186 Allen Brook Lane, Williston, VT 05495; or e-mail to jlc-editorial@hanleywood.com.

