

Reader Feedback

The following excerpts are taken from comments posted on jlonline.com in response to the JLC articles referenced.

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Letters

“Bracing Walls for Wind,” by Ted Cushman (July/13)

Great article. I agree that the 2009 IRC [International Residential Code], though longer, was much easier to comply with due to its flexibility. Sadly, though, in Pennsylvania they repealed that section of the IRC and reverted to the 2006. This was mainly due to politics and the lack of understanding of wall bracing by the Pennsylvania Builders Association (PBA). While rightfully repealing the residential sprinkler portion that was added in by a special interest group, they covertly added a couple of other sections they didn't understand. The politicians voted on the sprinkler issue and overlooked any attachments.

This left most municipalities scratching their heads as to what to enforce, since they had little understanding of either the 2006 or 2009 versions. Now [the towns] in a 100-mile radius of the center of the state that we build in loosely enforce a sketchy version of the 2006 IRC. While the PBA thought that stepping back in time is always easier, it wasn't the case with wall bracing. They removed the flexibility and made it more difficult for builders to comply with the code. —*design guy*

I am an architect with about 35 years' experience, the last 15 or so years designing primarily wood buildings. Several years ago I designed a fairly simple two-story house using the IRC R602.10 provisions for lateral bracing design, instead of employing a structural engineer. My conclusion was that this was a big mistake.

It is very time-consuming to understand the requirements, design the building, and document your design to the satisfaction of the building officials. I spent significantly more time and fee money (even at my lower billing rate) than I would have paid to a structural engineer to provide a complete structural package. The building costs were higher since there were more braced wall lines and other elements compared to an engineered approach.

All in all, in my experience this is really not a useful approach to lateral design, with perhaps the exception of a very small and very simple one-story building. My recommendation is to establish a relationship with a local structural engineer, and pay them for your structural design needs. You will end up with more design flexibility, a more economical and easily constructed building, faster design time, and quicker permit review.

And since you will be spending your time doing what you are good at (building or managing or whatever) instead of what you are not good at (structural design), you should be more profitable. All those things seem to me to outweigh the goal of not hiring a structural engineer for the sake of not hiring a structural engineer. —*JBGary*

“Fall Protection for Holes,” Timothy Carlson (Letters, Aug/13)

[in response to “Are Guardrails Needed if Workers Wear Harnesses?” (Q&A, Oct/12)]

Another consideration would be an elevator pit on the ground floor of a residential multifamily building that's under construction. An elevator pit on the ground floor is actually a floor hole and must be guarded or covered as soon as the hazard is created. Sometimes contractors opt for putting caution tape around the pit, but caution tape is not going to stop anyone from falling into the pit. —*Safetyfirst*

“Retrofit Toilet,” by Charles Wardell (Products, June/13)

Anyone installing one of these rear-outlet toilets, be sure to use a sponge rubber-type bowl seal. Do NOT EVER use a wax-type seal ring. It will leak over time, no matter what you do. The rubber one will allow for expansion and contraction between the frame and the bowl. Use the same rubber seal that you would use on a wall-mount chair carrier bowl connection. —*Icesailor*

“Replace the Deck Framing or Just Re-Skin?” by Greg DiBernardo (Q&A, July/13)

When underneath the deck framing, I also check the nails used in any existing hangers. You'd be surprised how many times the original hangers or hold-down hardware was attached with roofing nails, since they obviously “fit” and were readily available. —*WJParker*

“Recessed Can Covers,” by Charles Wardell (Products, Aug/13)

These new can covers are so awesome. Just a few years ago recessed lights were so energy inefficient. Today's are better. If you covered the older versions with insulation, the resulting thermal build-up could, and probably would, burn down the structure. The problem is getting people to retrofit their old [recessed lights] with new ones or new covers. —*Jon Wright*