

# STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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## Builder Banter

### JOBSITE THEFT ON THE RISE

Countrywide, reports are coming in that in addition to the boom in homebuilding, there's also a boom in stealing from jobsites. According to the South Florida Sun-Sentinel, construction thefts jumped 84 percent between 2002 and 2003 in southern Palm Beach County, FL. The Houston Chronicle reported Hardiplank siding as the "hot commodity" on burglar wish lists. One builder near Phoenix went so far as to say that thieves are scoring, "everything and the kitchen sink." Even the St. Louis chapter of Habitat for Humanity lost an estimated \$20,000 worth of tools. Though most of the stolen items remain at-large, a few items were recovered and in-kind donations from local Lowe's and Home Depot stores put the Habitat chapter back in business for its June blitz-build.

As for security, while this is difficult for raw materials, police recommend marking tools and on any kind of theft, to report the occurrence to the authorities quickly. The thief won't usually try to scrape off a name, but the person they sell it to will, so the sooner the loss is reported, the better the chance that the original markings have been left intact. Experts also recommend a second, hidden marking, such as a small, identifiable symbol scratched into the power cord. Other tips range from parking equipment in front of storage sheds to make removal of equipment and tools more difficult to leaving the lights on at the site and asking police to investigate if they drive by and the lights are off. [SOURCE: The Journal of Light Construction, June 2004, p. 23, 28]

### BUILDERS EAGAR TO LEARN ABOUT SPRINKLERS

According to a recent Home Fire Sprinkler Coalition (HFSC) survey of builders and others in the home construction industry, less than one-fifth of respondents have built a home with automatic fire sprinklers, but nearly 90 percent said they would find an educational program on home fire sprinklers helpful. NFPA is a founding member of HFSC. For more information, visit [www.homefiresprinkler.org](http://www.homefiresprinkler.org). [SOURCE: Builder Online]

#### Minimum Age Requirements on the Jobsite

At [www.builderonline.com](http://www.builderonline.com), this question was recently posted in the "Talk" section of the site: "What is the minimum age allowed on construction site during working hours, even if the child is not a worker, rather just visiting?"

The U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) has a brochure available for download that clears up any uncertainties and answers this question. "Once a youth reaches 18 years of age, he or she is no longer subject to the Federal child labor provisions."

"Seventeen hazardous non-farm jobs, as determined by the Secretary of Labor, are out of bounds for young workers below the age of 18. Generally, youth may not work at jobs that involve:

1. Manufacturing or storing explosives
2. Any driving by 16-year-olds, certain driving for 17-year-olds, and being an outside helper on a motor vehicle (limited driving by 17-year-olds is permitted.)
3. Coal mining
4. Logging and sawmilling
5. Power-driven woodworking machines\*
6. Exposure to radioactive substances and to ionizing radiations
7. Power-driven hoisting equipment
8. Power-driven metal-forming, punching, and shearing machines\*
9. Meat packing or processing, including power-driven meat slicing machines in retail and food service establishments\*
10. Power-driven bakery machines, including mixers
11. Power-driven paper-products machines, including balers and compactors\*
12. Manufacturing brick, tile, and related products
13. Power-driven circular saws, band saws, and guillotine shears\*
14. Wrecking, demolition, and ship breaking operations
15. Roofing operations\*
16. Excavation operations\*

\*Limited exemptions are provided for apprentices and student-learners under specified standards. [SOURCE: [www.builderonline.com](http://www.builderonline.com) & [www.youthrules.dol.gov](http://www.youthrules.dol.gov)]

## REMODELERS REACHING NEW CUSTOMERS ON THE WEB

A recent trend in web site development by remodelers has helped many companies reach some of the younger generations. A growing consumer base, Generation Xers are finally making money and beginning to use remodeling services. Unfortunately, they rarely read printed newspapers and they almost never turn to the Yellow Pages. Gen Xers sought the true meaning of quantum physics and other answers to pressing questions on the Internet while breezing through college. Now they are turning to the Internet to research available home remodeling projects, financing options and, most importantly, who can do the job for them. And, it seems to be catching on. According to the latest Remodeling Market Index (RMI), 48 percent of the survey respondents currently have a company web site. [SOURCE: Nation's Building News Online, June 14, 2004]

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# Preventing More Green around the House than Homeowners Desire

By Kevin Powell, NAHB Research Center

“Mold!” The mere mention of the word once struck fear in the minds of some homeowners, builders and material suppliers. However, since 2001, mold-related calls to the NAHB Research Center’s ToolBase Services Hotline have markedly decreased. Local home builders associations have also reported less interest in the mold issue from their members. Now that the initial panic associated with mold has died down a bit, the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) cautions the building industry to remain vigilant about controlling moisture on building materials before the materials get to the construction site, as well as while the home is being built.

Following is a description of the common-sense, practical methods for controlling moisture and, therefore, preventing mold on building materials.

## PREVENTING MOLD ALONG THE HOME BUILDING PROCESS

Mold affects many types of stakeholders in the home building business, and from the home builder’s perspective, each has a role in controlling mold. Home builders may request their material suppliers to devise strategies to address mold for all stages of their product’s life cycle. For truss and wall panel manufacturers, this may mean a request to build trusses and wall panels with “mold-free” wood, and to store and handle their products a certain way at the plant and along the way to the jobsite. The home builder could expect from the truss and wall panel manufacturer information regarding the value of close coordination on material deliveries and the importance of drying out framing lumber before closing-in so as to minimize the prospects of mold growth.

Builders should furthermore ensure that construction materials are properly stored on site or that their building practices are changed to a just-in-time (JIT) system to limit the time that materials are exposed to the elements. They should screen building materials so that products with mold on them are cleaned prior to installation. It is important to remember that mold is an emotionally-charged issue, and that a builder’s reputation might suffer if he installs products with visible mold on them, even if it is only a stain from prior mold growth. In addition, builders should ensure that building designs and construction details are suitable for the location of their homes. For example, very cold climates may warrant additional resources for insulation and air sealing to prevent condensation from occurring.

Homeowner education is an important part of the process as well. Builders should make certain that homeowners understand the relationship between home operation and maintenance and the prevention of mold growth. Specifically, they should describe the sources of moisture and symptoms of excess moisture in the home. Signs of excess moisture should result in immediate steps for corrective action by the homeowner, which may include contacting the builder to address the moisture problem before it becomes a mold issue. Homeowners should also understand how to maintain and operate the home, including the regular use of ventilation devices that remove excess moisture.

The process of constructing a house involves many parties, all with a role in the prevention of mold. Component manufacturers can provide a service over and above the manufacture of quality building components. Ensuring that the other parties involved in the home building process have a clear understanding and responsibility in the care and use of building products can promote good overall building practices and a more satisfactory partnership for all.

For more information on mold and moisture-related issues, visit [www.toolbase.org](http://www.toolbase.org), [www.moldtips.org](http://www.moldtips.org). See also past SBC articles on this topic: "[Dealing with Mold: Component Manufacturers Address Customer Concerns](#)" by Kent J. Pagel (June/July 2004), "[Mold & Construction](#)" by Nathan Yost (Jan/Feb 2003) and "[Whose Mold Is It?](#)" by Kent J. Pagel (Jan/Feb 2003). Also available for reference are two [WTCA](#) Truss Technology in Building documents ("Facts Regarding Mold on Wood Structural Components" and "Builder Advisory on Mold") as well as a [STCA](#) Steel Components in Construction brochure ("Facts Regarding Mold on Steel Components").

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