

STRUCTURAL BUILDING COMPONENTS MAGAZINE

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Builder Banter

SIX CONTRACTORS IN TX CITED FOR OSHA CONSTRUCTION SITE HAZARDS

Construction sites in Texas are the latest to be cited for work hazards in roving inspections by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), according to a news release issued by the Department of Labor from Fort Worth.

Six contractors were cited for allegedly failing to provide adequate fall protection for workers at one apartment construction site.

“Strong enforcement is a key part of this Administration’s efforts to reduce worker fatalities, injuries and illnesses,” said Labor Secretary Elaine Chao. “The significant penalty of \$151,200 in this case demonstrates our commitment to protecting the health and safety of American workers.”

One general contractor was issued citations and proposed penalties of \$81,900 for allegedly failing to ensure that workers operating rough terrain forklifts were trained, failing to train workers on the hazards of falls from roofs and unguarded balconies and failing to properly erect and maintain scaffolds.

The other contractors at the site were cited for similar violations, which also included failing to provide hard hats for workers.

The contractors were given 15 working days from receiving the citations to comply, to request an informal conference with the area director, or to contest the penalties and citations before the Independent Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission. [SOURCE: www.nbnnews.com]

EMPLOYEES ON 29 CONSTRUCTION SITES ORDERED TO STOP WORKING

In June, Florida’s Office of Insurance Regulations ordered employees on 29 home construction sites to stop working when the workers or their employers could not show proof of workers’ compensation insurance coverage. The stop-work orders were the result of a sweep of jobsites in two counties over two days. [SOURCE: JLC, AUGUST 2004, P. 20]

NEW OSHA WEB PAGES FOR RESIDENTIAL CONSTRUCTION

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) recently launched

web pages with information and tips specifically related to safety and healthy for workers in the residential construction industry. To learn more, visit www.osha.gov/SLTC/residential/index.html. [SOURCE: WISCONSIN BUILDING NEWS, OCTOBER 2004, P. 2]

HMI UPDATE: BUILDER CONFIDENCE REMAINS STRONG IN DECEMBER

The nation's home builders are in good holiday spirits this December, maintaining the same high level of confidence as the last two months, according to the National Association of Home Builders/Wells Fargo Housing Market Index (HMI). A new regional breakout of the HMI data also reveals that western builders are, on the whole, the most optimistic of all their colleagues.

The December HMI edged up to 71, indicating maintenance of strong builder attitudes in the last three months. "Builders have every reason for good cheer this holiday season," said NAHB President Bobby Rayburn, a home and apartment builder from Jackson, MS. "The bottom line is that buyer demand continues to keep builders busy and, like most business owners, builders are happiest when we're busy."

"On a nationwide basis, the final quarter of 2004 has been a good one for home builders," agreed NAHB Chief Economist David Seiders. "Indeed, the average HMI was up several points for the quarter, reflecting excellent financing conditions, rising home prices and an improving economy."

In December, the HMI component gauging current single-family sales remained unchanged at 77 while the component gauging expected sales in the next six months rose one point to 79 and the component gauging traffic of prospective buyers also rose one point to 52. [SOURCE: NAHB Press Release, 12/15/04]

NEW DECK ASSOCIATION

The North American Deck and Railing Association is a new organization being launched for deck builders and vendors. The group will elect its board and officers during an inaugural meeting at the DeckExpo 2005 in Tampa, Florida. Companies joining by the end of the convention will receive charter member status. For more information, check their web site at www.nadra.org. [SOURCE: Building Products Connection, November/December 2004, P. 9]

NHQ CERTIFIED FIRST TWO HOMEBUILDERS

This summer, the NAHB Research Center's National Housing Quality (NHQ) Program certified the first two NHQ pilot Certified Builders: Grayson Homes of Ellicott City, MD, and KB Home of Las Vegas. For more information, visit www.nahbrc.org/quality. [SOURCE: TOOLBASE News, Fall 2004, P. 3]

NAHB FACT SHEET: GREEN BUILDING—PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE

Past: Specialized, niche home builders began constructing resource-efficient, environmentally sensitive homes in the early 1970s. The home building industry coined the phrase “green building” in the late 1980s/early 1990s, turning a movement into a quiet revolution.

The first official green home building program began in the city of Austin, Texas, in 1991.

The Home Builders Association of Metro Denver introduced the first HBA-owned green building program in 1995. Over the years, Built Green® Colorado has become the largest green building program in the nation, with more than 100 builder members across the state.

Present: Today, new homes are twice as energy-efficient as they were 30 years ago, thanks to cutting-edge green building techniques and technologies available for new and remodeled homes.

Homes built today use a myriad of green building techniques and technologies that:

- Lower operating costs: Homes are equipped with more efficient heating and cooling systems and use less water, resulting in lower monthly utility bills. Improved construction methods better protect homes from rain and ground water and reduce upkeep and replacement costs, while use of recycled materials helps conserve natural resources.
- Reduce maintenance issues: Landscaping uses native or drought-resistant plants and grasses, and decks made of pressure-treated lumber or synthetic materials need no sealing or staining.
- Increase home value: Better re-sale values with documented lower monthly utility bills are being reported by homeowners.
- Improve environmental quality: Moisture-control products and low VOC paints contribute to a more comfortable indoor environment, and efficient use of materials helps conserve natural resources.

Nationwide, more than 47,000 homes were built using local green building program guidelines from 1990-2002. In 2003 alone, more than 14,000 green homes were constructed.

Future: Green building is a growing trend among home builders nationwide, with 31 successful green building programs now in existence. Eleven green building programs are owned or operated by members or affiliates of the National Association of Home Builders in Arizona, California, Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Missouri, New York and Washington.

NAHB's voluntary "Model Green Home Building Guidelines" will be provide a valuable tool for Home Builder Associations (HBAs), builders and developers by establishing minimum green thresholds for resource-efficient, environmentally sensitive home building.

To develop these guidelines, a group of key players consisting of large and small home builders, manufacturers, architects, environmentalists, government agencies and others with an interest in green building was invited to participate in a stakeholders group. Through the work of this diverse group, a comprehensive, practical set of voluntary guidelines will be available for the entire home building industry to apply to individual, regionally distinct green home building efforts.

Have an idea for items to include in this new department? Email them to builderbanter@sbcmag.info.

[SBC HOME PAGE](#)

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