

INSIDE: COIL COATINGS CONSUMERS ARE CRAVING!

May 2017

Rural Builder®

The Business Management Magazine for Rural Contractors

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**PRODUCT
PROFILE:**
Nails, Screws,
Clips & Clamps
P. 28



**TIPS FOR
BUILDING
YOUR
BUSINESS**

**GROWING
SIDE-BY-SIDE
WITH POST
FRAME**

SOLAR BARN BUILD

Modifying a Solar Barn
for a Prize-Worthy Herd

The Family
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Caledonia, Illinois.
See page 36 inside!





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Editor

Sharon Thatcher
sharon.thatcher@fwmedia.com
715-245-5767

Editorial Director

Maggie Judkins

VP Advertising Sales

Kevin D. Smith

Advertising Sales

Gary Reichert
gary.reichert@fwmedia.com
715-350-7080

Tyler Jenson

tyler.jenson@fwmedia.com
715-318-4505

Publication Design

Nicole MacMartin

Production Coordinators

Kathy Budsberg
kathy.budsberg@fwmedia.com
715-257-6020

Patti Kirchner

patti.kirchner@fwmedia.com
715-318-0839

Subscription Services

386-246-3452

Office Phone

715-445-2214

Office Fax

715-445-4087

F+W, A CONTENT + ECOMMERCE COMPANY

Chief Executive Officer Thomas F.X. Beusse

Chief Financial Officer Debra Delman

Chief Operating Officer Joe Seibert

Chief Content Strategist Steve Madden

Chief Technology Officer Joe Romello

SVP, General Manager-

F+W Crafts Group John Bolton

SVP, General Manager-

Small Business Group Ray Chelstowski

VP, Manufacturing & Logistics Phil Graham

Newstand Sales Scott T. Hill

scott.hill@procirc.com

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE

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E-MAIL THE EDITOR AT
sharon.thatcher@fwmedia.com

Check our website at
www.ruralbuilder.com

Options

One of the things I aim to do in *Rural Builder* is to pack as many reader options as possible into every issue. Not everyone is interested in any one given topic, so options make the information more useful to a wider audience. As well, time is extremely limited for builders, so providing lots of small, concisely-written articles rather than big chunks of endless copy makes sense.

I think we succeeded in this issue. Products are always popular and we have a bunch in this issue, including the top five Best Products of the Expo; product profiles on nails, screws, clips and clamps; as well as some new products we thought you might enjoy.

Also in this issue, major coil coaters tell us what's popular in the SMP panel lines these days. Although the traditional lines will always be good sellers, it's the textures, mattes and print lines that are turning heads.

There are some observations by business coach Bruce Hodes (a Frame Building Expo favorite) on growing your business.

Featured this issue as our Project of the Month is a nice solar barn (our cover photo) located in Illinois and built by one of our *Rural Builder* Hall of Fame inductees (Jim Peters, class of 1998).

In response to the March cover story: "Marketing Help Outreach: Suppliers Have Answers," Mark Battersby, our "Money Talk" columnist, felt that today's building business owners also need to know more about how to take advantage of tax breaks on their internet marketing. You'll find his article this issue as well.

If you just have time to look at photos, there's also a photo review of the 2017 Frame Building Expo.

One of my more memorable articles personally was from my visit to Plyco Corporation's manufacturing facility in Walkerton, Indiana. Walkerton is a small, rural town—my favorite kind of place, and a welcomed stop after enduring rush hour traffic in Chicago to get there.

Fred Mancusi and Kyler Pope were my guides through the plant. I also met up with Plyco engineer Al Geisthardt (*Rural Builder* Hall of Fame 2014). Check out the results of my visit in this issue's "How Things Are Made."

Off the beaten path, I stayed at nearby Swan Lake Golf Resort. If you're a Midwesterner who likes golf, special resort amenities, a rural backdrop, and you don't have the time to travel far, you should really check it out. Their pre-season rates were quite reasonable. **RB**



Sharon Thatcher,
editor
sharon.thatcher@fwmedia.com
715-245-5767



MARKET PULSE

■ DISPUTE WITH CANADA OVER LUMBER PRICES LINGERS: COULD DAIRY BE THE ANSWER?

Volatile lumber prices are causing jitters in areas of the U.S. construction industry dependent on softwood. Behind it is a long-running NAFTA dispute over pricing practices in Canada that the U.S. contends is creating unfair competition. At press time, the U.S. Commerce Department had announced that it would start imposing duties on Canadian softwood, with a decision on anti-dumping duties expected in early May.

The dairy industry is also experiencing jitters over a NAFTA pricing dispute with Canada. In early April, Canadian companies halted some dairy imports, exacerbating a glut and causing one major U.S. butter producer to give just 30 days notice that it would have to end supply contracts with farmers.

So what does dairy have to do with lumber? An online report by CBC Radio-Canada notes that a free-market think tank, the Montreal Economic Institute, has suggested that Canadian negotiators consider offering more open trade in dairy in exchange for more stable trade in softwood lumber "to secure long-term peace."

Reported the CBC: "Squeezing some protectionism out of both industries would be good for consumers, spur economic productivity, and ultimately result in more successful businesses in both countries, says the report.

"Trade barriers have never made more than a small minority of people richer, at the expense of the vast majority," says the paper. "Eliminating those that persist in the agricultural sectors under supply management and in the softwood lumber sector ... would be good both for consumers and for producers."

Source: "A dairy-for-lumber deal? Think-tank paper proposes Canada-U.S. swap for NAFTA", published by cbc.ca, March 23, 2017.

■ U.S. AND CANADIAN HOUSING STARTS

United States

February housing starts (released March 16) decreased 3%. Single-family starts increased 6.5%, multi-family decreased by 3.7%. Total U.S. permits, an indicator of future construction, decreased by 6.2%.
 Northeast (- 9.8%)
 Midwest (- 4.6%)
 South (- 3.8%)
 West (+ 35.7%)

Canada

February housing starts (released March 8) increased .6% from January. Total urban starts increased by .9%; total rural starts decreased 3.1%.
 Atlantic Provinces (+ 14.6%)
 Quebec (+ 21.5%)
 Ontario (- 14.9%)
 Prairie Provinces (+ 23.3%)
 British Columbia (+ 6.8%)

Source: Structural Building Components Association (sbcmag.info)

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BY RURAL BUILDER STAFF

MBMA'S UPDATED ENERGY DESIGN GUIDE FOR METAL BUILDING SYSTEMS NOW AVAILABLE

The Metal Building Manufacturers Association's (MBMA) *Energy Design Guide for Metal Building Systems, Second Edition*, is now available in print or PDF at techstreet.com/mbma. Through easy online ordering, this resource will put energy code compliance and design information into the hands of

anyone involved in construction and interested in increasing energy efficiency. It is useful for building owners, architects, engineers, builders, contractors, building officials, specifiers, and metal building manufacturers. The information can be applied to both new and existing buildings.

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OSHA TO DELAY ENFORCING CRYSTALLINE SILICA STANDARD FOR CONSTRUCTION

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced that it would delay enforcement of the crystalline silica standard that applies to the construction industry. The delay will allow the agency to conduct additional outreach and provide educational materials and guidance for employers.

The agency has determined that additional guidance is necessary due to the unique nature of the requirements in the construction standard. Originally scheduled to begin June 23, 2017, enforcement will now begin Sept. 23, 2017.

OSHA expects employers in the construction industry to continue to take steps either to come into compliance with the new permissible exposure limit, or to implement specific dust controls for certain operations as provided in Table 1 of the standard. Construction employers should also continue to prepare to implement the standard's other requirements, including exposure assessment, medical surveillance and employee training.

Under the Occupational Safety and Health Act of 1970, employers are responsible for providing safe and healthful workplaces for their employees. OSHA's role is to ensure these conditions for America's working men and women by setting and enforcing standards, and providing training, education and assistance. For more information, visit osha.gov.



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EPA FORMALDEHYDE RULE - ESSENTIAL INFORMATION FOR MANUFACTURERS & SPECIFIERS

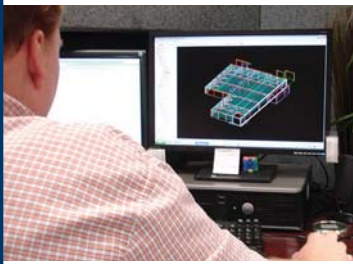
The Environmental Protection Agency's Formaldehyde Standards for Composite Wood Products regulation published on December 12, 2016, becomes effective May 22, 2017. All manufacturers (including importers), fabricators, suppliers, distributors, and retailers of composite wood products, and component parts or finished goods containing these materials,

must comply by December 12, 2017. Laminated products must comply December 12, 2023.

The treatment industry, however, voluntarily moved away from formaldehyde years ago, trending towards micronized products, mainly copper azoles.

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BILL PROHIBITING WOOD CONSTRUCTION OF MULTIFAMILY DWELLINGS FAILS IN MARYLAND

The Maryland State Legislature adjourned for the year in early April without taking action on House Bill 1311 or Senate Bill 722, which intended to prohibit multifamily dwellings above three stories from being constructed using wood-frame construction. American Wood Council (AWC) Northeast Regional Manager Matt Hunter, BCO, along with numerous representatives from building owners, architecture, development, and engineering, testified in opposition of both bills.

AWC President and CEO Robert Glowinski issued the following statement after the close of this year's legislative session in Maryland:

"This is a legislative victory of common sense. Our national building codes, including those used in Maryland, are the culmination of extensive work and research done by architects, engineers, and building and fire code officials establishing precise requirements for safe construction. Substituting the judgment of legislators for these construction experts simply did not make sense, and we believe that became well understood during testimony.

"As those experts all know, non-combustible structural materials like steel and concrete are also affected by fire and can fail, as we've seen in several examples nationwide over the last month. These bills were not promoting additional safety measures; they were promoting the interests of specific building materials."

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THE BEST PRODUCTS

of the 2017 Frame Building Expo

Each year at the Frame Building Expo there is a special product area designated to showcase products from exhibitors. Visitors are given an opportunity to vote for their favorite products.

Voting for the Best Products of the 2017 Frame Building Expo in Nashville was very spirited. More than 250 people cast their ballots, an impressive one-sixth of all expo attendees.

Only one vote separated the first two finishers, and just two votes between second and third.

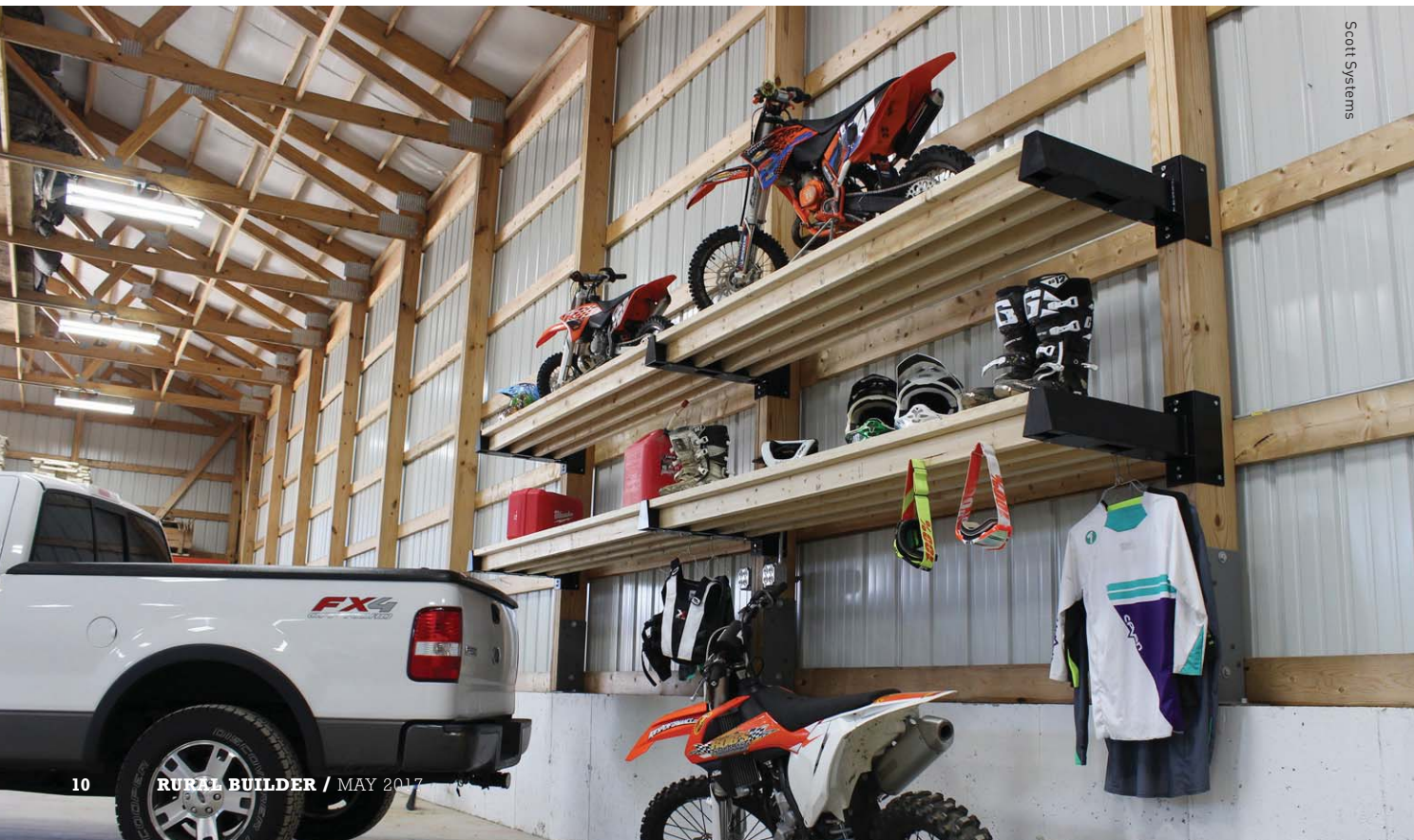
So, for 2017, we introduce the **5 Best Products of the Expo**.

1.

Post-Rack Storage Bracket from Scott Systems

This was Scott Systems first visit to the expo but its Post-Rack storage bracket really struck a chord with builders. There is a “why-didn’t-I-think-of-that” simplicity about the heavy-duty brackets that are designed exclusively for post-frame.

The Post-Rack traces its lineage to a patented safety device for scaffolding. Load testing has confirmed that two brackets and a lumber-based shelf can



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handle loads safely up to 1,000 pounds.

Post-Rack brackets are manufactured in the USA from heavy-gauge steel and are robotic welded and powder coated black.

The simple, ingenious design makes easy work of running long continuous shelving around (and up) a building, and because they are secured to the post with six lag bolts, they can be easily moved as needed.

The Post-Rack has a variable “grip” that fits upright posts from 3.25” to 6.25”, accommodating 3-ply, 4-ply, 4 x 6 and 6 x 6 posts. Shelving is built from standard 2” x 12” and 2” x 4” lumber on site and to match the width of openings between upright posts. **For more information circle 101**



2. LAKESIDE CONSTRUCTION FASTENERS

SC Steel Guard from Lakeside Construction Fasteners

Making its first appearance at the expo, the SC Steel Guard was built to resist corrosion and wind uplift. It is engineered for high torque, with a flat head service to prevent wobbling during installation and can be installed with both battery operated and impact screwdrivers.

The SC Steel Guard works its magic with a lower head profile, larger outer diameter, and concealed weather-tite EPDM washer. High-low threads make it ideal for maximum holding power.

The SC Steel Guard stainless steel ¼ HWH fastener head will not red rust for the life of the metal panel and is available in #10 x 1”– 3”.

For more information circle 102



Main Street Vinyl Window from AJ Manufacturing

Vinyl windows have become very popular in other markets, and thanks to AJ Manufacturing, has now become available to post frame. AJ’s Main Street line is a popular energy-efficient thermal window that is now available in single hung, single slider and fixed-lite styles. It can also be built with insulated clear glass, insulated low-E glass or clear single-glazed glass.

05/

MAY

18-20, 48th Annual MBCEA Conference, New Orleans, mbcea.org

06/

JUNE

11-13, Western States Roofing Contractors Association (WSRCA) Expo, Las Vegas, wsrca.com

22-24, Florida Roofing and Sheet Metal Association Convention and Expo (FRSA), Orlando, floridarroof.com

08/

AUGUST

28-29, Post-Frame Marketing & Economic Summit, Indianapolis, IN, nfba.org

10/

OCTOBER

18-20, METALCON, Las Vegas, metalcon.com

25-27, Remodeling Show/Deck Expo/JLV Nashville, remodelingdeck.com

11/

NOVEMBER

18-20, METALCON, Las Vegas, metalcon.com

25-27, Remodeling Show/Deck Expo/JLV Nashville, remodelingdeck.com

8-10, Greenbuild International Conference & Expo, Boston, greenbuildexpo.com

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14-16, Frame Building Expo, Columbus, Ohio, nfba.org

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The Main Street is made with fusion-welded corners and multi-chambered main frame. Optional grids can be sealed within the glass.

For more information circle 103

5. MASTER GRIPPERS MDP Series from Leland Industries

This is the second consecutive year that Leland Industries' Master Grippers MDP Series has landed in the top 5 of the Best Products competition and it continues to grow in popularity. MDP stands for Mini Drill Point, and the great thing about these tiny titans is their ability to drill and tap high tensile steel as well as 16 gauge sheet metal. That makes it ideal for attaching to wood framing or light gauge steel: one fastener for two applications.

The MDP's ability to drive through thin steel or aluminum without dimpling the panel means that standing water and eventual rust are eliminated. It does this using a feature called a "non-walking point," meaning the point does not skate around the panel causing scratches, rather it digs in and drills.

The MDP also won't crack fiberglass or PVC when used in those applications.

A plus for the builder: Mini Drill Points are fast workers and reduce installer fatigue when working in extended arm positions.

Master Grippers MDP series screws are available to 4" lengths in hex washer or truss head styles, and can be powder coated to match your color and your panel warranty.

For more information circle 105



4. Novagard Solutions - Novaflex

Good things are meant to last. Such is the case with Novaflex metal roof sealant. It has quite a following in the metal world. It is one of the premier silicone sealants around, with excellent adhesion to all metal types including Kynar.

Novaflex extrudes down to -20°F and up to 120°F, is tack free in 10-15 minutes, and completely cured in two days.

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Novaflex is recommended for sealing and bonding around wood, metal siding, galvanized steel, flashing, metal roof, trim, galvanized gutters, PVC, aluminum, masonry, downspouts, and most common construction materials.

If you want it to blend into its surroundings, not a problem. Novaflex comes in colors.

For more information circle 104

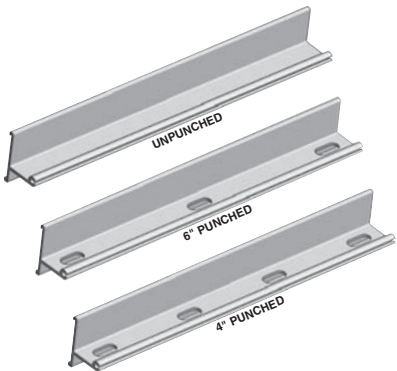


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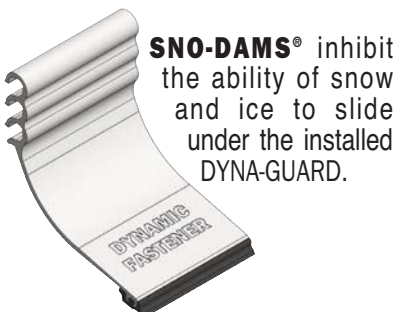


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product feature

BY SHARON THATCHER



Ceranamel in burgandy installed on a commercial building by Kulps of Stratford. Photo courtesy of Dura Coat

Coil Coatings Consumers Are Craving

Textures, matte and prints are part of the brave new world of metal

WHILE YOUR STANDARD GLOSSY ROOF and wall panels in standard colors will always find a market, a percentage of consumers will seek out something a bit more architecturally appealing. In today's brave new world of metal, that is happening more often and even with buyers in rural areas.

TEXTURES

One of the latest trends taking off is textured products. All the major coil coaters have their textured lines: Ceram-A-Star from Akzo Nobel, Ceranamel from Dura Coat and WeatherXL Crinkle Finish from Valspar. These are all SMP lines in the mid-price range that are prevalent in the rural contractor's customer base. What they all have in common is a low-gloss finish and textured look that hides defects and offers a more finished appeal.

Textures can be used on both roof and wall panels, and can feign the look of something it isn't. For instance, from the road, a black textured metal roof might take on the look of asphalt roofing.

Heath Buller, market development manager for Dura Coat, said roofing customers were the first to embrace textures, but now consumers are also buying into its use as an accent piece

on wall corners and wainscoting. "So let's say you could have your regular black sidewall and black roof, but then you may have a low-gloss textured wainscoting or corner trim pieces," Buller explained. "It gives the whole project an aesthetic, textured feel."

Victoria Kale, marketing manager for the metal coatings division at Akzo Nobel, noted: "The primary advantage of the new finishes is the aesthetics. They offer a variety of appearances that add interest to a project and appeal to many design preferences. They can truly elevate the look of a building."

It's a look that plays well in the selling process. "People can look and feel the difference just from a flat sample sitting on a countertop," Buller said, "so it's been a great point-of-sale product."

MATTE FINISHES

Another popular look today are smooth, matte finishes. Currently dominating in rural markets for matte colors are black, darker browns and greens.

PRINTS

A little less popular in the rural market are prints, but



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product feature

BY SHARON THATCHER

it is still a growing segment. “I do see prints becoming a little more widely accepted and widely available,” Buller said.

Jeff Alexander, vice president of sales for Valspar Coil and Extrusion has also

seen this trend. “Prints have been around for a long time, but there have been more metal roof profile introductions in the last few years,” he said.

Kale has observed an increase in popularity for printed finishes that imi-

tate natural materials. Today’s chemistry can produce amazing results. “The sophistication of modern coatings and application methods enable the trend towards wrinkles, textures and prints,” she said. “Due to new technologies and techniques, the metal products produced today are very convincing imitations of the “real thing”. Thus, customers can enjoy the look of wood, granite or slate, but with better durability and an installation advantage using metal.”

Prints are used for garage doors, siding, and roofing, as well as for accent features. Got a client who would love a cedar garage door but not the cost of one? Garage doors are increasingly making use of realistic prints. “It is an expensive process but it is growing faster and it is getting more affordable,” Buller said.

COLORS

Tradition still rules in the building market and most likely always will. Yes, there are some funky finishes requested from time-to-time, and if you have enough money, every major coil coater would be happy to fill your special order. In the meantime, grays, greens, browns and earth tones are safe bets about everywhere. For regional favorites, look for sea foam greens and aqua blues in the Carolinas and Florida regions. “Then you go out towards Wyoming, Montana and Idaho and it’s all light browns, light greens, tans, very earthy colors,” said Buller.

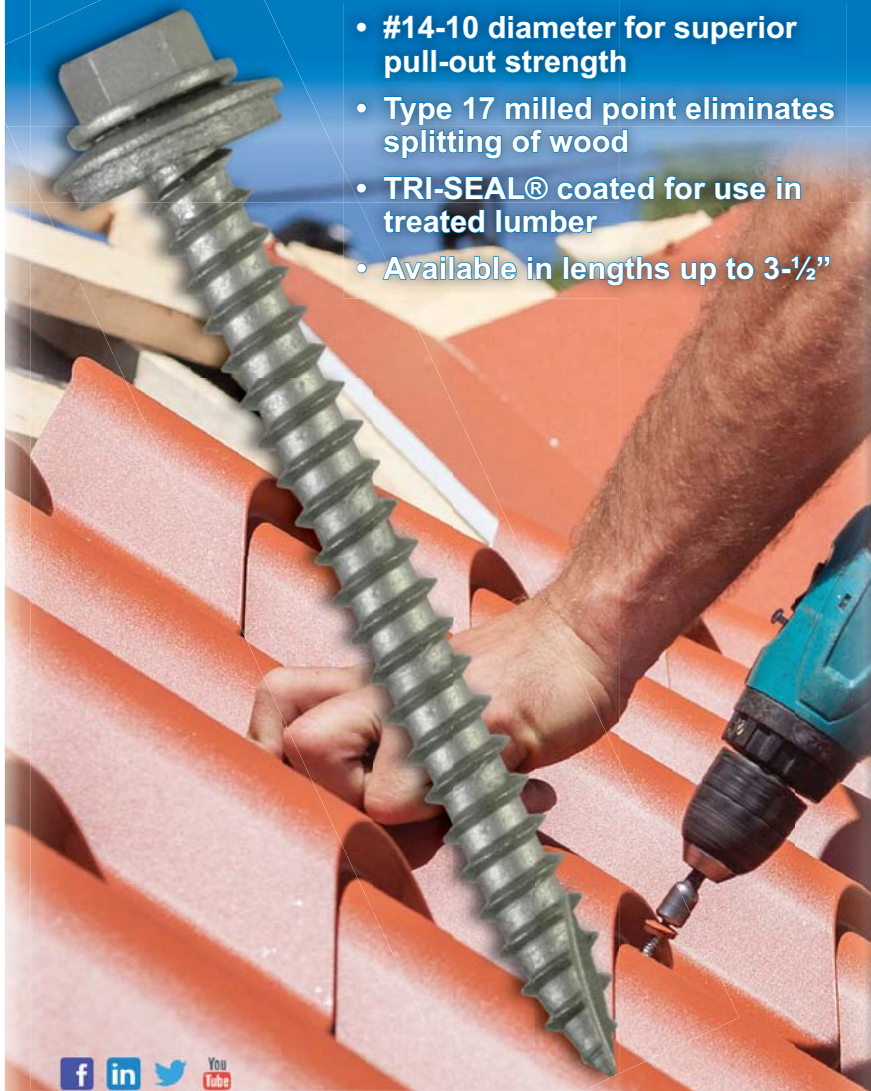
In more rural areas, Kale sees fewer trends related to color. “Many builders and consumers tend to be conservative in their exterior color choices as they know the buildings need to stand the test of time,” she said. “They rely on charcoal, brown, hunter green, red, tan and white. These colors complement a variety of architectural styles and, due to their long-time popularity, the buildings look “up-to-date” for many years.

Because textures are more pronounced in darker colors, more washed-out in lighter tones, it stands to reason that the darker colors are typically more popular in the textured lines.

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product feature

BY SHARON THATCHER



Residential application of Ceram-A-Star. Photo courtesy of Akzo Nobel

WHERE THE TREND STARTED

Alexander said textured finishes first established popularity in Europe. “We have had texture coatings for awhile in our European division and we were seeing more of a demand here in the U.S. when we launched our textured coating. There was a demand to have another unique finish in a mid-range system,” said Alexander.

Textures started showing up first on high-end residential roofing: homeowners who wanted metal roofing that didn’t look like an old weathered barn roof. “That’s where they started, but the textured finish, and even the matte finish, has filtered out to the nice high-end to medium-end barns as well,” said Buller.

Today’s hobby shops have also proven a good fit. “Man caves, hobby shops, storage buildings... we’re seeing a lot of that,” Alexander said.

IT’S MORE THAN JUST LOOKS

For the end customer, textures, prints and matte finishes are sold on aesthetics, but for installers and roll formers there is



Installation of WeatherXL Crinkle Finish. Photo courtesy of Valspar

another built-in advantage to textured lines in particular: they’re very forgiving of scuffs and scratches.

“Wrinkled and matte finishes produce less glare than conventional coatings,” Kale explained. “This can minimize the appearance of installation and structural imperfections.”

Alexander said that textures can hide defects that a typical solid-color coating can’t, also noting that textured effects can serve as camouflage to hide fasteners. “It adds a nice effect so you don’t see those finishing screws,” he said.

ROLL FORMERS EMBRACED THE ADDED CHOICES

Established roll formers have welcomed the expanded choices in coil coatings. “I think what drove part of this was the over-saturation of roll formers and everybody carrying the exact same product,” Buller said. “There was a demand [for roll formers] to differentiate themselves.”

As options become more available, not every supplier can afford to carry a huge inventory, so those with the means can find a niche.

“When it first came out, it was more of a high-end premium product. There was a huge price gap. That price gap has come down a little bit, but it still is a differentiating product because, at the end of the day, a fabricator has to carry dual inventories. They have the typical same colors and the smooth finish they’ve had for 40 years. Now this new product comes out and they’ve got to pick from maybe 20 colors of that. So they decide: maybe I’ll carry five colors of texture, and I charge a little bit of a premium for it as a differentiator,” said Buller.

Alexander has also noticed the desire for diversity among builders and roll formers. “We work directly with builders, roll formers and manufacturers and they were looking for something unique, something they could add to their product lines and help differentiate themselves,” said Alexander.

It isn’t an easy or quick decision, however. “We have customers that went onboard right away and some that are still looking at it. They have to look at their sales, their product line, their inventory and decide if they can take on new inventory. Most of the new trends you see, and the new product offerings, takes a while to launch up in this market: about 5-7 years for a trend to get established,” Alexander said. **RB**

Good, Better, Best

Within the coating industries there are three tiers of products: Good, Better and Best. Pricing and weatherability help to differentiate the tiers.

Polyester coatings are in the **Good** tier. Polyester coatings are used for rainware, gutter and fascias, places on a building that don’t receive 100 percent sunlight.

The **Better** tier is where siliconized modified polyester (SMP) products reside (such as Ceranamel, WeatherXL and Ceram-A-Star). These are common in the rural construction industry.

In the **Best** tier are 70 Percent PVDF coatings. These are pricier systems noted for their highest weatherability and flexibility in architectural design, common in high-end residential and high-end commercial buildings. There tends to be much more fluctuation in popular styles and colors as consumers in this category are generally looking for something more unique and specialized.

For more information on Akzo Nobel circle 110; for Dura Coat circle 111; for Valspar circle 112

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GROWING BIGGER AS A BUSINESS

isn't as important as growing better, but if you want to grow into a high-performance machine, Bruce Hodes, author of the book *Five Ogres and an Angel: Guarding the Gates of Organization Improvement*, offers these observations.

- Any company has problems. You want to make sure that you keep solving the problems you have so you can move on to new problems.
- The more people you get involved in an organization, the more complex the communication becomes. The ceo/owner needs to have a leadership team that will be his partners in solving the business problems they will encounter.
- Everybody in a team brings their past to the team, and they bring their way of doing things. People have to give up their way and adopt the way of the company.
- People that have been there awhile also have to change. There may be more technology, or instead of one crew there are now multiple crews. They have to change the way they work. They have a past, too, that they have to get rid of, and that's a struggle."
- The ceo/owner really has two challenges: one challenge is to make sure he has the right people in the right places on his bus so he has the right people leading his company. The second challenge is making sure the company is doing what it needs to do to be viable five years out.
- Companies need a planning process: a formal, annual process that allows the leader to surround himself with the best thinkers in the company to help figure out what the company needs to do to grow and invest.
- If you're going to grow you're going to have to niche into different spaces to compete against builders that just cut prices.
- Growing involves a simple planning process. Sit down and figure out what you want to do in the next 12 months and, if you want to grow, how you are going to do that. What are the problems in the company and where does the company need investment and resources? Then, with an aligned



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leadership group, decide what you want to get done in the next year, put a plan in place and do it.

- Growing a company takes discipline and it may take risk. You may have to borrow money, you may have to leverage, you may be growing on what you are earning.
- Too many times you have leaders who want to do it all by themselves. They have the vision, but they have to have people around them who are prepared to work with them and really be partners, people who will give feedback and have different skill sets than the owner. You don't want clones of the owner. A common mistake is when an owner/ceo surrounds himself with people who are too much like him. If you're going to be successful as a family you have to have some differentiators.
- You have to find ways that will support you in the marketplace and to gain customers. There are certainly lots of

people who can build buildings. The question from the customer is: why am I picking you?

- An owner/ceo has to be really open to being challenged, and seeing things from a different perspective.
- Realize that the way it is now is not going to be the same way it will be in five years. We're in a very dynamic age. All businesses are.
- The owner/ceo has a vision of how the company is going to build buildings and the kind of company it's going to be, the kind of culture or camaraderie it's going to have, then he surrounds himself with the kind of people who find that vision compelling and want to play that kind of game. Then he makes sure that if they help him grow the company it is worth their effort in a financial way.
- Employees have to buy into the vision of the owner of having a great company,

doing things efficiently, having really happy customers.

- Part of how you grow a company is having clients that rave about you. If you don't have a brand, you don't have a reputation, all you have is your last customer.
- Two scenarios: you call a customer and he tells you there were big problems with his building, it leaks, he really regrets his decision; versus, the quality of the building is great, the crew was great, they were terrific to work with. People want to work for that second kind of company that does quality work. You can grow that kind of company.
- You've got to work together in a high-performance manner, versus we have to put this together and survive the day. Many companies, they just want to survive the day. Great companies are really *into* what they do." **RB**



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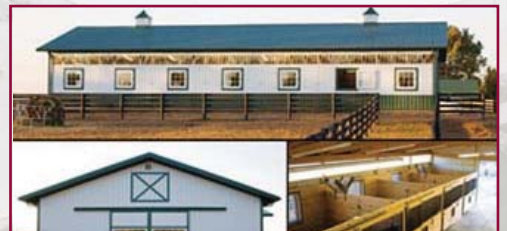
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Plyco Corporation Growing Side-By-Side With Post Frame

[Editor's Note: Rural Builder offers a closer look at some of the manufacturing companies that provide products to rural builders in this special column: How Things Are Made.]

More than 60 years ago, Plyco Corporation founder Pete Kohl started manufacturing basement windows in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin. Kohl was constantly looking for new product and market opportunities for his business. It was in these early days of the company, he discovered the world of post-frame construction. He quickly embraced it, helped promote it, grew his company alongside it and today Plyco is one of the most established companies in the modern post-frame era.

As the company grew Kohl brought Garry Matz on as a partner. Matz became full owner upon Pete's death in 2004.

The Plyco of today has literally grown from the ground up, expanding its product line from basement windows to include the major components needed in a post-frame structure: doors, cupolas, ridge vents, reflective insulation and fasteners, etc. The additions were made possible when the Plyco family of companies expanded with the acquisitions of Modern Door Corporation, Combo Track and Hardware, East Coast Fasteners and PlyFoil.

Windows are still manufactured in Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin, where Kohl established his business and the headquarters is located, while the largest portion of manufacturing takes place in Walkerton, Indiana.

The Walkerton complex sits in a small Northern Indiana farming community. There, Plant Manager Jeff Gratrix oversees a local workforce of approximately 200 employees.

ABOVE: An overhead view of the Walkerton, Indiana, facility. The manufacturing campus includes Modern Door, East Coast Fastener and Plyco warehouse facilities.

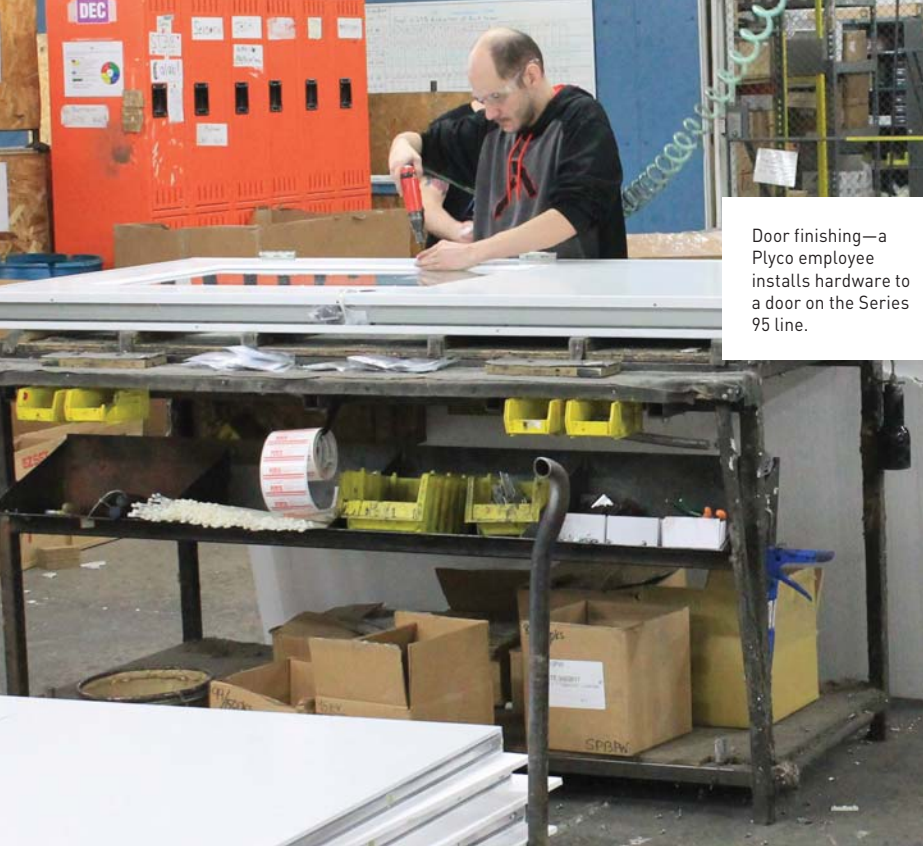
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PLYCO
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Door finishing—a Plyco employee installs hardware to a door on the Series 95 line.



A small sample of doors produced each week at the Walkerton plant.

how things are made

BY SHARON THATCHER

Director of Sales & Marketing Fred Mancusi points to an aerial view in the office hallway to show the Walkerton growth. What began as two buildings at the front of the property is now only about one-quarter of the entire size of the sprawling complex. Business has been good.

But no business stays good for more than six decades if it doesn't have something that people keep wanting. Mancusi credits the company's focus on quality. "From a quality aspect, I think that's why so many of our customers are long-term customers. We're not a company that just sells a product, we also try to service the customer with everything from training to product application and much more."

The company's customer base includes contractors, distributors and roll formers. It's a very hands-on approach to doing business, with company-employed sales staff handling orders and maintaining follow-through from point-of-sale to application. The company believes that having a strong, experienced sales staff in the field working with customers helps grow its customer base and the post-frame industry.

The company points to its team's years of experience as a part of its strength. From the management staff, to the sales staff, to the manufacturing team, years of experience shines through. Many Plyco employees have worked in the post frame or construction industries for most of their careers, Mancusi noted, adding that this experience and longevity brings tremendous knowledge that helps customers build their businesses.

Product testing is a high priority in the company, with batch testing and production line testing a routine part of the workday. All products are routinely tested in Plyco's in-house test labs. Of incoming raw materials, Mancusi said, "We'll reject entire loads of raw materials if they don't meet our quality standards."

Plyco also makes regular use of third-party testing to affirm its own results.

Plyco holds several patents, including one on its door manufacturing. The company has also increased quality and efficiency by automating several of its manufacturing methods. Plyco boasts one of the best logistic systems in the industry.

Quality can mean many things, and in

how things are made

BY SHARON THATCHER

the construction industry that includes staying ahead of the curve on code changes and making sure that products continue to meet or exceed code standards. “As the codes and markets have developed, that has driven our new products and our company. We try to stay ahead of that game,” said Mancusi. He believes the future of codes will continue to drive the quality of post-frame products. “Al Geisthardt leads our engineers in tracking codes, product development and quality,” Mancusi said. “His 38 years in the post-frame industry gives Plyco a leg up.

“I think you’re going to see a lot more code issues, and a lot more code enforcements,” he said. “There’s a new code coming out in 2018 that I think will push the envelope.”

Mancusi bases this in part because of what he has witnessed in the past when codes have been updated. “Even inexpensive buildings are evolving to higher end,” he noted. “They’re using more quality products.”

He sees this not in just suburban markets, which is a growing market in post frame, but even in traditional ag markets where animal confinement issues

like bird flu and swine flu have driven changes in animal housing techniques and, consequently, building products. “They haven’t solved either one [bird flu or swine flu] so builders are changing their processes, which changes our product,” said Mancusi. “The buildings are changing and I think that they will continue to change.”

At Plyco, gone are the days when post-frame products could be ordered or replaced with a parts number. “When you get to a product that has so many variations you end up going to a configurator instead of a part number. Between

Door assembly—A view of the door line prior to the foaming process. Ever-improving processes in assembly increases efficiency for Plyco manufacturing.



Things you might not know about Plyco...

+ Founder Pete Kohl was also one of the founders of the National Frame Building Association (originally called the National Frame Builders Association).

+ Plyco was one of the first exhibitors at the first NFBA conference (forerunner of the Expo) and the first Plyco Reception was held in Pete Kohl’s hotel room.

door styles, door hardware and colors, the configurations are endless and you have to be prepared for anything and all," he said.

Mancusi is optimistic about the future of post-frame in general because of the increasing awareness of its diversity. For the builder, it offers a good market in which to exist. "In the past, when ag was good, the suburban-type building market dropped, and visa versa, so it's been very good in that respect," he said, adding that suburban diversity is now expanding the post-frame market even wider. "I think post frame will fit well into the future. There are inroads being made. I think PFMI (the National Frame Building Association's Post Frame Market Initiative) has done wonders at getting the word out to the architects and code officials that [post frame] does work."

With each success, comes more recognition of its potential and now builders are "starting to think outside the box" and helping to improve its mainstream acceptance.

Plyco is poised to continue being part of that journey. **RB**

For more information on Plyco circle 115



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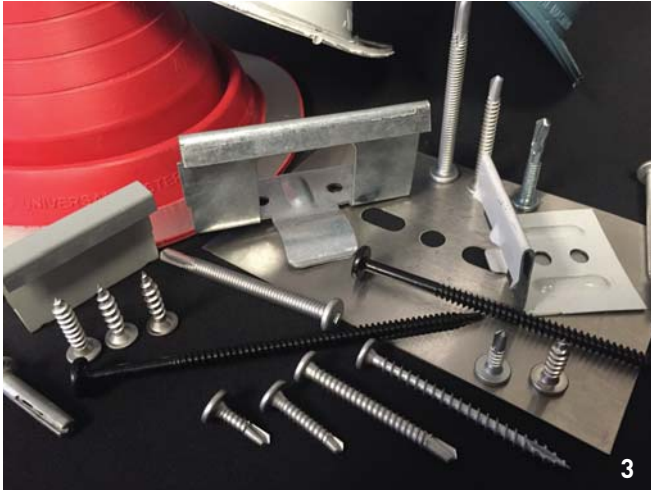


2

2. LAKESIDE CONSTRUCTION FASTENERS / CIRCLE 121

Lakeside Construction Fasteners, a USA company, offers vast long-life fastener solutions, including ZMAX Long-Life. ZMAX is available in #10 x 1" - 3." High-low threads and sharp-cut point allows for maximum holding power. ZMAX can be used with battery-operated and impact screw guns. Alloy fasteners are engineered for corrosion applications. A larger outer diameter prevents wind uplift and the ZMAX is suitable in snow-load regions. It's also ideal for coastal environments, preventing red rust on fastener heads once installed into metal buildings.





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4

4. IDEAL BUILDING FASTENERS / CIRCLE 123

Ideal Building Fasteners is a major supplier and manufacturer of fasteners for the metal construction post-frame industry. Its line of post-frame screws, featuring Ideal's Dual Grip brand, meets or exceeds the specifications of most building projects. Ideal also stocks a complete line of other fasteners, closure strips, butyl caulk tapes and pipe sealers.

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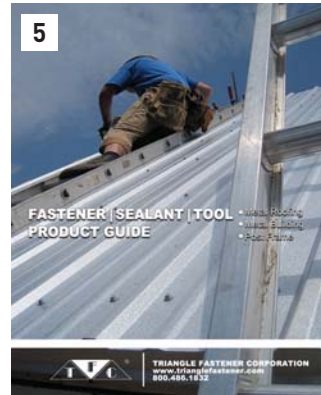
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BY RURAL BUIDER STAFF

5. TRIANGLE FASTENER CORP. / CIRCLE 124

TFC is a leading supplier of standard and specialty fasteners, tools, sealants and accessories for the commercial construction industry. A complete line of fasteners for metal-to-metal, metal-to-wood, drywall and concrete anchoring is available from each of its 23 locations. Triangle's Need-It-Now! Program is designed to provide fastening solutions for difficult applications. TFC has eight in-house painting facilities that can custom color-match fasteners to exact requirements with delivery in three days or less. TFC offers job-site assistance, technical assistance, inventory-management programs and product development. The TFC Market-Specific Catalogs can be found on the company's website and are complete with products and technical information on a wide variety of fastening systems solutions.



6. MAZE NAILS / CIRCLE 125

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7. EAST COAST FASTENERS / CIRCLE 126

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variety of coatings to assure the builder has the best product on the market and the fastest cutting tips, East Coast fasteners are manufactured to standards that assure fast and reliable installation every time. East Coast Fasteners provides the strongest and most effective fasteners for your construction needs. For assistance in finding the best fastener, contact a Plyco/East Coast Fasteners building component professional.



8. LELAND INDUSTRIES / CIRCLE 127

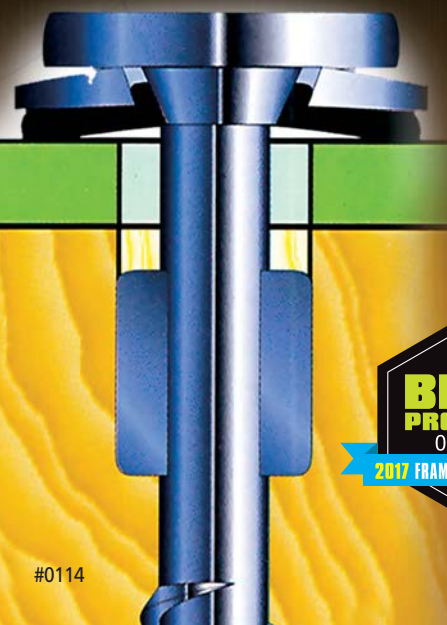
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product profile

BY RURAL BUILDER STAFF



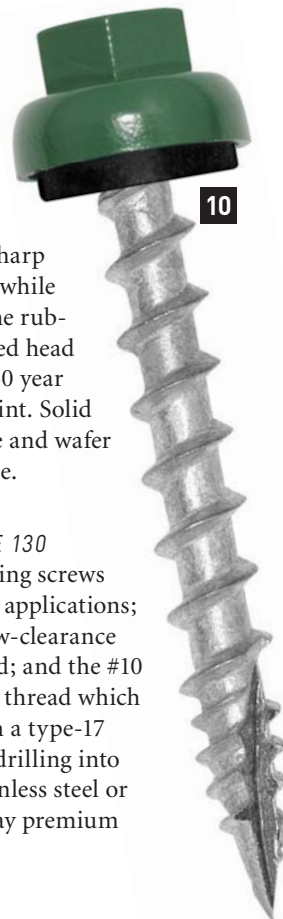
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9. S-5! / CIRCLE 128

S-5! ancillary attachment solutions, including VersaBracket and CorruBracket product lines, fasten easily and securely to almost any metal roof profile, including exposed-fastened and corrugated. S-5!'s innovative technologies also include clamps for the attachment of walkways, satellites, signs, banners, light fixtures, gas piping, HVAC equipment, electrical conduit, antennas and more. S-5! has the most complete line and only independently-tested snow retention systems in the marketplace, including ColorGard, X-Gard, VersaGard and the new DualGard.

10. ST FASTENING SYSTEMS / CIRCLE 129

Sealtite Building Fasteners is now ST Fastening Systems. The company supplies steel-frame and post-frame screws for agricultural, commercial, industrial and residential metal roof applications. Product strengths are drill quality and corrosion resistance, as showcased on the MAXX SteelBinder and the KwikSeal WoodBinder with Micro-Bit drill point for metal-to-wood applications. This point is more consistent than the sharp point Type 17 design and will drill multiple thickness of steel, while eliminating the metal pigtails that can embed themselves in the rubber washer. The ZXL WoodBinder zinc-aluminum alloy molded head and the ST-XL Wood Binder 304 SS cap, both of which carry 40 year warranties against red rust are now standard with this new point. Solid and vented foam closure strips, rubber pipe flashings, pancake and wafer head screws for standing seam roofs round out the product line.



10



11. DYNAMIC FASTENER / CIRCLE 130

Dynamic offers D.F. brand self-drilling screws for stitching and sheet-to-structural applications; clip screws for jobs that require a low-clearance head when fastening to steel or wood; and the #10 Pole Barn Fasteners with a high-low thread which gives better pull-out values and with a type-17 point that allows for quicker/easier drilling into wood. Fasteners are available in stainless steel or with Dyna-Coat 1,000 hour salt spray premium coating.

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In addition to advertising opportunities, the Source Book offers a great opportunity to show everyone what you can do as a builder or supplier. If you have a nice project or building product you'd like considered for inclusion, we're looking for finished post frame and metal building projects, as well as the products used in the making of those buildings. If your project or product makes it into the magazine, you'll have bragging rights for all your promotional materials!

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Above: Three men who know the post-frame industry well were inducted into the *Rural Builder* Hall of Fame at the 2017 Frame Building Expo, left to right, Joe Zulovich, Glen Graber and Ken Guffey. **Below:** The staff of Everlast Roofing paused for a photo during a very busy trade show. More photos from the Frame Building Expo on pages 42, 43.



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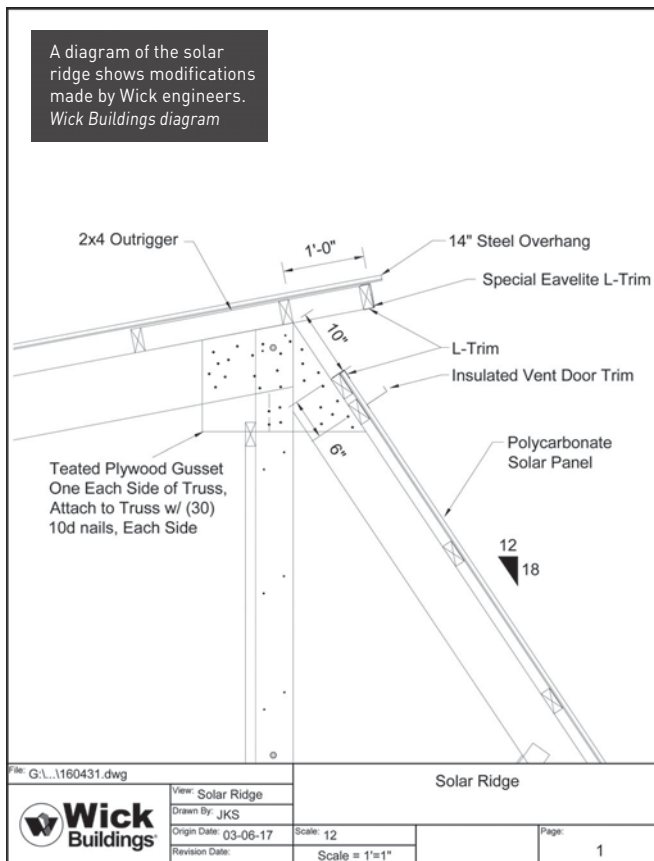
project of the month

BY SHARON THATCHER



A 12-inch solar overhang protects the feed alley and cattle from the elements. Family AF-AYR Farm photo

A diagram of the solar ridge shows modifications made by Wick engineers. Wick Buildings diagram



Modifying a Solar Barn for a Prize-Worthy Herd

"A BARN IS ONLY AS GOOD AS THE FARMER USING IT," Illinois contractor Jim Peters (a 1998 *Rural Builder* Hall of Fame inductee) believes, noting that a barn properly built, but poorly used is a waste of everyone's time and effort. That's why it was a special pleasure for him in 2016 to build a solar barn for the Borchardt family in Caledonia, Illinois, to house weaned calves up to breeding-age heifers.

The Borchardts—Gregg, Patricia and their son Luke—raise international prize-winning Ayrshires at the Family AF-AYR Farm. It's a farmer's farm. "They're good livestock people," said Peters.

The family, which operates a milking operation of about 140 cows, wanted a barn that offered an open-air environment for the cattle and one that was easy to maintain. They chose solar

believing that it would keep the barn drier and warmer in cold Northern Illinois winters.

The Borchardts nixed their original plans to have curtains on both the north side and south side of the barn in preference for a modified 2 x 9 foot solar overhang on the south side. That helps block the south winds and blowing rain and snow, along with providing protection for the exterior feed alley it covers.

The extra overhang, however, called for a closer look at the ventilation system.

Peters is a Wick dealer operating his own business, Freeport Builders, so he turned to Wick engineers to help him with the customized ventilation design.

“We worked diligently on the ventilation to get it right,” Peters said, noting that “in the early days of solar barns, the solar ridge would be long and narrow so we borrowed from what another builder did and came up with a 12 inch overhang [at the top],” Peters said.

The pens are 20 feet wide and provide ample moving room for the animals, and the lack of any post obstructions makes for easy maintenance chores. “It’s just a beautiful arrangement,” said Peters. The Borchardt family designed the pens and did the gate and hardware installation and welding themselves.

Gregg Borchardt explained that having no posts in the bed-

PROJECT DETAILS:

- **Project:** 56 feet wide x 200 feet long solar calf and heifer barn for Family AF-AYR Farm, Caledonia, Illinois
- **Builder:** Jim Peters, Freeport Builders
- **Building System:** Post-frame from Wick Buildings Inc.
- **Unique features:** Customer- and builder-modified solar overhang and ridge vent design for better ventilation and weather protection. An extra 2 feet x 9 feet total cover over feed alley. DripStop to protect steel from deterioration from potential manure fumes.
- **Foundation or structural components:** Concrete wall foundations, all sides.
- **Doors:** Four 14 foot by 12 foot overhead doors by Raynor Doors, Dixon, Illinois;
- **Unique accessories:** NORBCO-North side ventilation curtains; NORBCO headlocks on feed aisle, south side.

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project of the month

BY SHARON THATCHER



The new barn is 56 x 200 feet and houses calves and up to breeding-age heifers. Wick Buildings photo

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ded pack area, only gates, helps with maintenance. Heavy-duty bolt latches hold the gates together in the middle, “so when you clean the barn or bed it, you just open that latch and the whole backside of the shed is open,” he said.

The Borchardts are happy with their new barn. “It was kind of a mild winter, but we didn’t have any problems having the south side completely open,” Gregg said. “Having the solar panels come down gives it a little more protection along the front.” What’s more, Borchardt added, “there’s still plenty of clearance to drive the tractor under there.”

This is not the first barn Peters has built for the Borchardts. He built two others in 2004 that were compost bedded pack barns, a new concept in the Midwest at the time. Gregg said the family’s familiarity with Peters’ work, his background in ag construction, and a competitive bid helped win them over for a third barn.

So important is tending to the cows and their every need, that the Borchardt family has recently installed cameras so they can watch their animals from inside the house.

For more information on Wick Buildings circle 133



The pens provide ample moving room for animals. Family AF-AVR photo



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Circle Reader Service #382

Tax Deductible Internet Marketing

The IRS now recognizes many forms of virtual promotion

IT IS AN UNFORTUNATE FACT OF LIFE, but many builders and contractors often overlook the tax deductions for marketing expenses. According to the IRS, advertising and marketing expenses must only be reasonable and directly related to the rural building business in order to be tax deductible.

Promotional costs that create goodwill, such as sponsoring a peewee football team are also deductible so long as there is a clear connection between the sponsorship and the building business. Putting the operation's name on the team or listing the building business's name in the program is usually evidence the expenditure is deductible. Unfortunately, the same is not always true when it comes to Internet promotion.

Small building businesses often lump advertising, promotions, public relations and other sales support expenses under the heading of "marketing." Others record the various types of expense separately, especially if the building business has designated a specific employee for these functions. Separating advertising and promotion budgets is the first step when reducing costs with tax deductions.

In the eyes of the IRS, *advertising* consists of paid, scripted messages directed at potential clients and customers. *Promotion* is paid exposure for the business. Examples of advertising include magazine and newspaper ads, radio and TV spots, billboards, website banner ads and signage at events. Advertising that does not directly relate to the builder's services or products, such as supporting legislation or promoting a charity, may or may not be tax deductible.

Specific advertising expenses often include such costs as those for media buys, expenses associated with creating ads, agency fees and commissions. Promotional expenses are expenditures made by a builder to make its services better known to potential customers. The IRS considers promotion expenses to be tax-deductible as business expenses—provided they are ordinary and necessary. Promotional expenses include the fees charged by an event for the building business to sponsor, items given away, signage created for an event, staff time creating and attending events, products or services given away and fees paid to consultants, event workers or endorsers.

A building business's website as well as its internet marketing/advertising expenses are also tax deductible. In fact, many of the website and marketing services contracted for can be deducted in the same year they are incurred. Unfortunately, there are a few services where the cost can be recovered only through the long amortization write-off period. Consider this breakdown of various website and internet marketing/advertising related services and how they must be treated under our tax rules:

Marketing via Social Media is becoming increasingly popular as recognized by our tax laws. The expense of social media creation and ongoing account management are considered advertising expenses and can be claimed as a tax deduction in the year paid or incurred. Consider, a few examples:

- Google AdWords used to attract new clients instantly; a simple campaign campaign can be setup in minutes and display search results within a couple of hours.
- Pay-per-click (PPC) campaigns. With AdWords, like the other internet marketing and advertising expenses, the cost for a PPC campaign also falls within the miscellaneous advertising section of the building operation's tax return.
- Facebook ad campaigns
- Twitter ad campaigns
- Display banner ad campaigns
- Costs for hiring an agency to conduct any of these campaigns
- On-Page and Off-Page SEO, basic and ongoing. (Search Engine Optimization (SEO) campaign results are a long-term campaign to keep your website at the top of search engine result pages, but it takes time if it's done properly.)
- Link Building

Don't forget old-fashioned **Goodwill Advertising**. If a builder is expected to benefit in some shape or form from a promotional activity, the cost of institutional or goodwill advertising may be deducted.



Mark Battersby has 40 years experience in small business issues, tax and financial matters. Contact him at 610-789-2480 or MCBatt12@Earthlink.net.

Social media

Tax laws now recognize many virtual forms of advertising and marketing

This is because the motive of advertising activity is to get the name of the contractor or the building business in front of the public. Goodwill advertising includes:

- Promotional activities that ask people to donate for charity
- Getting a business sponsor
- Distributing product samples
- Organizing contests and offering rewards or prizes.

Unfortunately, labor costs involved in organizing such activities cannot be deducted. On the off chance that the website is being used just for publicizing, web support costs can be deducted as a promoting cost. In the event that the site is utilized for sales and has an e-commerce option, it is a sales expense considered independently. Of course, designing and maintenance costs for even an e-commerce website are deductible.

Naturally, detailed records and receipts for these marketing expenses are strongly recommended. Also, every builder and contractor should be aware of the IRS's guidelines (or lack of guidelines) for developing and maintaining a website that is often the key ingredient in online advertising and marketing.

The IRS has yet to issue formal guidance on the treatment of website development costs. However, informal internal guidance suggests that one appropri-

ate approach is to treat those costs like an item of software and depreciate them over three years.

It is clear, however, that taxpayers who pay large amounts to develop sophisticated sites have been allocating their costs to items such as software development (currently deductible, like research and development costs), utilizing the Section 179 first-year expensing election and even as currently-deductible advertising expenses.

In reality, the classification of web design and development services depend on when the work was done, who did it and the specifics of the actual work. For example, if an outside contractor designs a simple template website for informational purposes that does not require extensive custom programming, it can be capitalized and the expenditures amortized over its "useful life" (usually three years) once put into service. Or, depending on the operation's accounting practices, the cost could be deductible as an advertising expense in the year it was completed.

Here's a look at several specific website-related expenditures:

- Cost for the design of the website by an outside contractor hired for this purpose
- Cost for the template if purchasing the design pre-made
- Cost for hosting the site as

well as the domain fee

- Cost for any premium services (such as add-ons or plug-ins for the business's site)
- Cost for maintenance
- If a new blog was created and uses freelance bloggers for its content, be sure to keep records of all related expenses because they can often be tax deductions as well.

If the website was purchased, a builder is required to amortize the cost over a three-year period. Content or design updates and ongoing maintenance are considered advertising and can be deducted the same year. It is a similar story for hosting, domains, and other similar products that are usually deducted the same year.

Up to \$5,000 of so-called "startup" expenses, can be deducted in the first year—even where the website is built before the building business begins operations. While that immediate deduction for startup costs is reduced, dollar-for-dollar when start-up costs exceed \$50,000, the balance is recoverable over a 15 year period.

It's important to remember that every builder and contractor should always consult with a tax professional about what is and is not deductible by the building business. Keep documentation and detailed records of how things were used. **RB**

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expo review

BY RURAL BUILDER STAFF

**Frame Building Expo had
 record year**

For the second year in a row, the National Frame Building Association's Frame Building Expo sold out of exhibitor space for the trade show. The 2017 event showcased more exhibitors and square feet of exhibit space than any year since 2006, and traffic was good for the workshops, tradeshow and special events.

This year the show was the 50th anniversary event and was held in Nashville, a popular destination for expo exhibitors and visitors.

Next year's expo will be held in Columbus, Ohio, February 14-16. Stay tuned to details at nfba.org.



Swenson Shear's annual shear competition has grown since it first began three years ago, with the winner taking home a new shear.



Gary Reichert (left) and Sharon Thatcher from *Rural Builder* and *Frame Building News* magazines gave a workshop presentation on taking advantage of local and national media exposure.



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Maze Nails has been an expo exhibitor throughout the years and was back to help celebrate the 50th anniversary.



Foot traffic was good at the trade show and visitors gave positive reviews.

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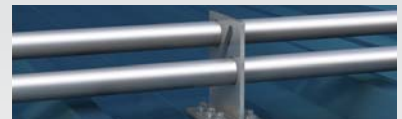
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Circle Reader Service #450

new products

BY RURAL BUILDER STAFF



CLAMP-TO-SEAM SNOW RETENTION SYSTEM

Sno Gem recently introduced its Gem Series Clamp-To-Seam snow retention systems for standing seam metal roofs.

The Gem Series is available in single- or double-bar retention and 1" or 2" bar-size. Both clamp-to-seam attachments utilize the MEC Bracket, allowing for multiple bar heights and variations to accommodate any snow retention need.

The Gem Clamp with MEC Bracket is available in a variety of sizes and configurations so it can be attached to most standing seam profiles. The company's patent-pending WaveLock Technology, with five points of attachment, provides unparalleled strength. Sno Gem's Silver Bullet set screws include a rounded bullet tip to maximize strength without damaging the paint finish or seam. It's available powder coated or with a Kynar finish to match the standing seam roof.

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The Winbag can be used for positioning window and door frames before final fastening; lifting even heavy doors into place on or off the hinges, adjusting household appliances and more.

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Circle 141



MB™ New Micro-Bit™ Engineering
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Circle 142



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Circle 143

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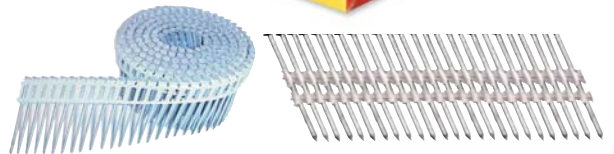
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