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An Update on Mose

Last month's editorial about Mose from Minnesota — a young Amish builder who wants to build sheds for a living — didn't land Mose a job (yet) but rather some offers to move from his north central Minnesota home to any number of places, including the Northeast, Florida, and Alaska.

That wasn't part of the deal, and Mose isn't moving, but those people were all well-intentioned and Mose thanks you for the invitations.

What I found most interesting about the feedback was a phone call from a Mennonite builder in the Carolinas. His

point wasn't about Mose; it was that he disagreed with my comment in the article in which I stated that Amish people need help from the rest of us to market their products on the internet, which he disagreed with on its surface.

"This is a very lucrative occupation once you get established, even though that can take a few years," the builder said. "You don't need to market your buildings on the internet."

It took me a bit to realize that wasn't advice for Mose, it was advice for me. Yes, Mose had mentioned to me that he didn't have resources to be able to start his own business from where he lives, without the

internet marketing that allows for exposure beyond the nearby shed lots.

The caller's point was that there are builders all across the country doing very well with no internet exposure at all, including him. Those roadside shed lots — even those in remote areas like north central Minnesota — can be enough marketing because word-of-mouth takes over from there. I'll keep you updated in future issues about Mose. And in the meantime, I'll remember what I learned from the discussion.

— Rocky Landsverk



20 YEARS OF SUCCESS MADE SIMPLE

As I reflect on 20 years of business, I have found that our success comes from the great people we work with and the valuable partnerships we have formed. From our humble beginnings in 2003 to becoming an industry leader, our growth has come from the dedication and hard work of our employees and partners in the shed industry.

I want to personally thank everyone that has been a part of this journey, and I look forward to many more years of shared growth and success. We are just getting started!

- Phil Falls, Founder & CEO





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Correction: In last month's Renovations article, we improperly labeled this photo, which is a product from Geberit.

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Gary Reichert,
Publisher, Shield Wall Media

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Shed Ramps

Consider Many Factors To
Select the Right Shed Ramp

BY MARK ROBINS

PHOTO COURTESY OF
INNOVATIONS MANUFACTURING INC.



PHOTO COURTESY OF SHEDS UNLIMITED

Shed entrance ramps make loading and unloading heavy equipment from sheds or garages safe and easy without the struggle of lifting it over the lip of the building. They reduce the risk of accidents, and prevent damage and wear and tear on zero-turn mowers, tractors, 4-wheelers, motorcycles, snow blowers, wood chip-pers and other equipment. Just like sheds themselves, shed ramps are available in a wide range of styles, lengths, widths, and weight capacities.

Some key ramp shed considerations include:

- What weight capacity do you need?
- How much room do you have for installation?
- How high is the entrance to your shed or garage?
- Will you be permanently mounting your ramps or storing them when not in use?
- Do you need a single ramp or dual ramps?

To best inform and assist your customer, here's what you need to know about selecting the right shed ramp.

Wood, Metal, Concrete

What the shed ramp is made of is a

key consideration. Ideally, the surface has grip when it rains or snows; high-traction surfaces prevent slipping in wet weather conditions. Also you want a long-lasting material. Shed ramps that don't warp, twist, splinter, rot, rust, or decay will save time and money from not having to replace them year after year.

Wood ramps are frequently thought of as the most cost-effective solution for shed builders. You can have them stained or painted to match the color of the shed. "Using wood and offering the ability to customize your length and width is the key to a perfect ramp," said Sheree Holmes, owner of Superior Sheds, Williamston, South Carolina.

Sergey Mashkov, sales manager at Sheds Unlimited, said that, "Treated wood works well; however, it's not the grippiest material when it's wet. It also could provide an issue in the later years of the building life if the end of the ramp is placed on dirt."

One way to alleviate wood's "slipperiness" is to fix some galvanized welded wire mesh to the surface using galvanized staples to give some additional grip. Adrien de Maleissye, sales executive at Innovations Manufacturing Inc., Denver, said that wood shed ramps "will get the job done; however they are heavy, have

Common Shed Ramp Installation Errors

From Sergey Mashkov, sales manager at Sheds Unlimited, Morgantown, Pennsylvania

- Ramps not being long enough could be a common mistake.
- Not having a flat surface for the shed ramp to set on could also create issues.
- Having a level site, not setting shed pads too high above grade, and considering how steep of a ramp you are OK with.

From Adrien de Maleissye, sales executive at Innovations Manufacturing Inc., Denver

- Length
- Weight capacity
- Lack of anti-slip surface
- Poor material choice
- Uneven ground preparation
- Know the clearance of the building before installation and onsite ground preparation.

a limited life expectancy, and need to be maintained."

Metal ramps, especially aluminum, have grown in popularity over the past five years. They are factory made with embossed and punched holes in them to give grip. They also have the edges turned up to help stop wheels going off the side. Ramps are available in both steel and aluminum. Aluminum ramps are the lightest but they are not as strong and robust as the steel ramps. The steel ramps are heavier but they are stronger and will withstand a lot more abuse than an aluminum ramp.

"Metal ramps are lightweight, durable and can handle heavy loads," de Maleissye explained. Mashkov said, "Metal is one of the best options, you can get a lightweight aluminum that has great grip, strength, longevity, and mobility. This would be one of the best ramp options. While the cost ends up being a good bit more than treated wood, it is worth it in the long term"

Concrete shed ramps are the most



PHOTO COURTESY OF INNOVATIONS MANUFACTURING INC.

expensive material used for shed ramps but are the most durable. Concrete ramps are ideal for large sheds and equipment; they can support extremely heavy loads. They can't catch on fire, which can help protect the sheds and the contents inside the shed. They are also resistant to harsh weather conditions and pests, and do not need to be painted or sealed. "Concrete ramps are most used for garages and have worked well for decades," de Maleissye said.

Mashkov also said concrete ramps are a good option, "As long as you're committed to the location and never need it moved. They are long-lasting and strong; however, their inability to be moved can prove to be an issue when it comes to yard work as well as ever moving the building. We would only recommend concrete ramps if your building doesn't have a wood floor and has concrete for the floor of the building."

Prepare to plan ahead if your project involves concrete ramps. Unlike working with wood, you can't make changes mid-project with concrete. Decide what it is that you're going to do and then set up your project to reach that goal.

Size, Slope

Measurements are integral to shed ramp success. Size, thickness, and weight capacities should be based on the characteristics of each shed and its foundation. Start with measuring the shed's door width; generally it will be the width of your ramp.

"We use all wood, 2' x 6' construction

for our ramps," said Holmes. "They can be used for a variety of purposes but are strong enough to handle most lawn equipment without flexing. All sheds are a little different once set up. Whether it's on a slope or on flat ground will dictate how long your ramp needs to be. We offer the ability to custom order your shed by offering them by the square footage."

Knowing the elevation from the shed floor to the ground is integral when trying to build and select a shed ramp. "Knowing the elevation of the building's floor to the ground will determine the ramp length, as you don't want a short ramp that has too steep of a rise," Mashkov said. How important is the shed ramp slope? "Shed ramps without the proper slope can be difficult and possibly dangerous," Holmes said.

Meanwhile, de Maleissye said large sheds may need longer ramps to ensure a gradual incline. "A ramp that is too steep can be impractical and unsafe. Most sheds are 8" to 12" off the ground and 4' ramps work perfect on them. Shed base height and slope is very important when deciding the size of the ramp that is necessary for that shed. A ramp that is too steep is unsafe and may make moving things in and out of the shed more difficult. A gradual slope is safer and will make loading and unloading a shed less difficult."

What about customization? Holmes said all sheds are a little different once set up. "Whether it's on a slope or on flat ground will dictate how long your ramp needs to be."

Shed Ramp Resources

A-Shed USA

Salt Lake City, Utah
www.a-shed.com
 (801) 485-2424

Innovations Manufacturing Inc.

Denver, Colorado
www.im-inc.com
 (303) 321-0945

Robin Sheds

Lecanto, Florida
www.robinsheds.com
 (352) 527-3500

Sequoia Sheds

Red Bluff, California
www.sequoiasheds.com
 (530) 840-4465

The Shed Guys

Central Point, Oregon
www.theshedguys.com
 (541) 779-7433

Sheds Unlimited

Morgantown, Pennsylvania
www.shedsunlimited.net
 (717) 442-3281

Superior Sheds LLC

Williamston, S.C.
mysuperiorsheds.com
 (864) 915-9475

West Quebec Shed Company

Alcove, Quebec, Canada
www.westquebecshedcompany.com
 (612) 852-2930

"Custom ramps are important when there is a unique shed design, limited space, or specific weight requirements," de Maleissye said. "I often make custom ramps for customers who use their shed or garage for motorcycles, cars, tractors or wheelchairs." Another variable to be considered, according to Mashkov is the type of doors the ramp is going to. "Pre-hung doors, garage doors, and wood shed doors would have a big effect on the type of ramp that works best." **GSCB**



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Fasteners for Sheds

The Correct Fastener Helps Sheds Come Together

BY MARK ROBINS

While they may seem like a small detail, fasteners are an essential component to create a well-built shed. Having the correct type, size, and color of shed screws can finish and transform an outdoor building properly, which can add value and beauty to a property. Available in various shapes and sizes, they are ideal for joining different shed components together effectively while also providing additional strength.

There are many similarities regarding fasteners' role in shed construction and other types of building construction. "Addressing the continuous load path on a shed can be just as important as addressing it on building structures," said Chris Crawford, director, OEM Marketing Segment for Simpson Strong-Tie. "Properly securing the shed to a foundation; providing connections to counter uplift and shear or lateral forces can be critical to maintaining a solid and long-lasting shed."

"Fasteners, generally nails and screws — regardless of the type of construction, siding and roofing used — hold together the structure and attach the outside skin of the shed," said Ed Lash, product manager for Atlas Building Products. Stephen G. Redmann, national account manager at Leland Industries, said fasteners are important because "they carry the load including diaphragm action for the roof."

Joining Shed Pieces

When used in shed construction, fasteners join two pieces of material. Again, the role of fasteners in sheds is similar to other buildings — securing all components together such as subfloor/foundation to the walls and then fastening the



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIRECT METALS, INC.

walls to the roof structure.

However, Crawford said that where sheds sometimes differ from conventional buildings is many times the shed is built on large and long timbers called "skids." "The purpose of skids is to make it easier to move a factory built building into its permanent location. So fastening the floor joists to these timbers is critical for the longevity of the structure. Sometimes if there is a porch area on the building you will see exterior decking screws fastening down the deck boards."

When building a shed, Ryan Distler,

product manager at KYOCERA SENCOR Industrial Tools Inc., said, "Think of it the same way as you would build a home, just on a smaller scale. Typically, you would use nails for framing and screws for components like sheathing and subfloor. However, some people may choose metal connection hardware when framing their shed, especially if they live in hurricane-prone areas."

Which Fastener?

There are several types of fasteners you may need for your shed. "Roofing nails

should be used for the roof, and typical smooth shank framing nails and wood screws — or wood to light steel screws if installing metal siding — would be applicable for building a shed,” Distler said.

According to Crawford, the most common types of fasteners found in shed construction are common nails, lags, and carriage bolts, but in many essential connections, “A structurally rated screw like the Strong-Drive SDS and SDWS series can take the place of many of these nails, screws, lag and carriage bolts. There may be shed applications where stainless steel fasteners are needed to secure cladding and trim — especially in materials such as cedar and PVC trim.”

David Quehl, director of sales and marketing at Direct Metals Inc., said, “A wood-frame shed metal sidewall will require a #10 diameter metal-to-wood fastener, either with a self-piercing sharp point or a small drill point to penetrate the metal and tap the wood frame. It will be assembled with a bonded EPDM rubber sealing washer. It will be zinc plated to prevent corrosion. Paint will be an option to match the sidewall color. The roof substrate is often thin plywood or the more popular OSB. The proper fastener should be a larger #12 diameter to ensure more thread engagement in the porous OSB to prevent the fastener from stripping out and causing a potential roof leak. The roof heights are low, so it is necessary to have a fastener long enough to penetrate the metal and OSB, but not protrude out of the OSB too far. It will be assembled, coated and painted like the #10 diameter to ensure long-lasting performance.”

When building an all-metal framed and sided shed, Lash said to use self-drilling screws with sealing washers, particularly paying attention to the gauge of the structure to which the panels will be attached. “If building a wood-framed shed with metal panels on the sides and roof, you would want to use self-piercing wood screws with sealing washers. A woodshed with wood siding roof sheathing and shingles would use standard construction grade wood screws.”

Redmann said one major shed fastener difference is its tip. “A self-drill tip covers metal to metal. A mini-drill point covers it all. The diameter of the screw [can guarantee a long-lasting shed]. This remains the thing to deal with. Add strength in all categories: shear, tensile and pull out.”

For wood sheds Crawford said use wood screws with fast-starting points and low-torque thread designs. “For metal sheds, fasteners with drill points and thread designs allow for boring through surface materials and drilling/securing into metal while pulling the materials together. For plastic sheds, self-tapping fasteners are key. Plastic fasteners are often used to connect parts that are not impacted by loads or external forces. Metal fasten-

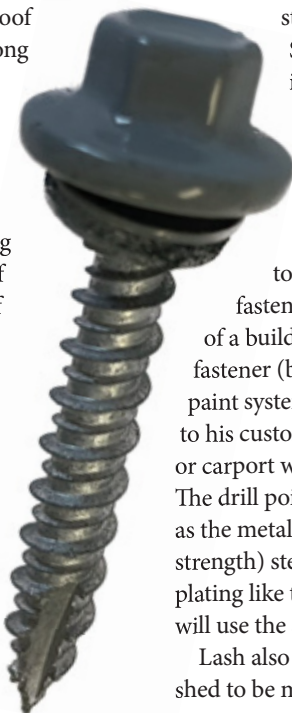


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A Rust Inhibitor Coating

Any fastener that will be exposed to the elements should have a rust inhibitor coating. Most carbon steel deck screws carry a coating with a minimum salt-spray test hour rating of 1,000 hours. This is especially important when it comes to the screws used to secure swing door hinges, door ramps and metal roofing/siding, just to name a few applications. These are usually the first applications that will show signs of corrosion. There is a significant difference between decorative platings (aesthetics) and rust inhibitor coatings when it comes to protection against fastener corrosion. The structure manufacturer should make sure they are specifying and getting what is required for each of their various applications. Using the correct fastener and a high-quality fastener during construction greatly reduces the opportunity for jobsite callbacks due to fastener failure. Saving a little money on the fastener up front could cost a manufacturer more in the end.

Information provided by Tim White, National Sales Manager – Co-Op Screw Pan American Screw, LLC, A Marmon/Berkshire-Hathaway Company

ers are often used to connect load-bearing surfaces. Many structural screw products, such as the Strong-Drive SDWC Truss screw, can take the place of more labor-intensive connectors, like H2.5 hurricane ties.”

High Quality

Because shed costs are lower than traditional buildings, shed builders will often look to cut costs by using the most economical fasteners to be able to keep selling prices low. But Quehl said that since fasteners make up a very small percent of the overall cost of a building, a savvy shed builder that uses a higher quality fastener (better plating, additional coating, and a high-quality paint system) will be able to market their building as an upgrade to his customers. “A metal frame shed like a free-standing garage or carport will require the use of a high-quality self-drilling screw. The drill point must be able to penetrate the metal panel as well as the metal frame, often made from very high-tensile (high-strength) steel. It will have a bonded EPDM washer and zinc plating like the wood shed fastener. [Again,] the wood frame shed will use the sharp-point screw.”

Lash also said to use high-quality fasteners to construct the shed to be more secure in the longevity of the shed. “Not all screws are created equal and using the wrong kind of fastener or a low-quality fastener can have safety and quality implications for your project,” he said.

Fastener Failure

Lash said one of the biggest problems you can have with a shed is a fastener failure. This will not only ruin the shed, but will create

Choosing Fasteners for Prefabs & Modulars

By Eric Velliquette, President
Lakeside Construction Fasteners (LCF)

Metal-to-wood structures that can be built in a factory (prefabricated) and hauled away by a commercial transportation vehicle is considered a modular building. For the modular metal building industry, these types of metal-to-wood structures include sheds, modular homes, tiny homes, carports, cabins, dormitories, shelters, and garages. Recommended metal-to-wood fasteners are those with coarse threads for maximum holding power securing the metal roof or metal sidewalls to the prefabricated wood structure. This would include the #10-14 WOODX or the #12-8 FASTLOK (1/4 hex washer head).

With intense vibrations from the road transferred to these modular building structures, I fielded customer complaints where the metal-to-wood fasteners with micro-drill points backed out of the structure during transportation long hauls. Best long-term results are achieved with the type-17 cut point or pierce point. The modular buildings use composite decking that includes CDC, plywood, or OSB where the metal panels are then secured with these types of fasteners. With tested coarse threads, the LCF fastener product line offers many solutions that lock the metal panels in place without fail.

The modular metal building industry continues to expand at an alarming rate which LCF continues to support each year. Many consider modular buildings as a low-cost labor savings while offering green solutions using metal panels for roof and sidewall applications. I foresee this industry increasing another 150% moving forward through 2028. We continue to observe traditional buildings utilizing modular offices built at the manufacturing centers then hauled to the construction site where the prefabricated offices are incorporated within the final building structure.

a safety hazard. He explained the best ways to prevent fastener failures are:

- Be certain to use correct size and length screws.
- Do not overdrive or strip out the screws.
- Be certain to use the correct nutsetters for the screws used.
- Be certain to use stainless steel fasteners or fasteners rated for the application if driving into treated lumber.

- Use high quality fasteners with a good reputation.
- Use fasteners rated for use outside.

Another source of fastener failure is not selecting the appropriate structural fastener, something that is critical for off-site built sheds. Crawford said they have to endure, “non-traditional forces that are imposed during the lifting, transporting (bumps in the road), and



PHOTO COURTESY OF KYOCERA SENCOR INDUSTRIAL TOOLS INC.



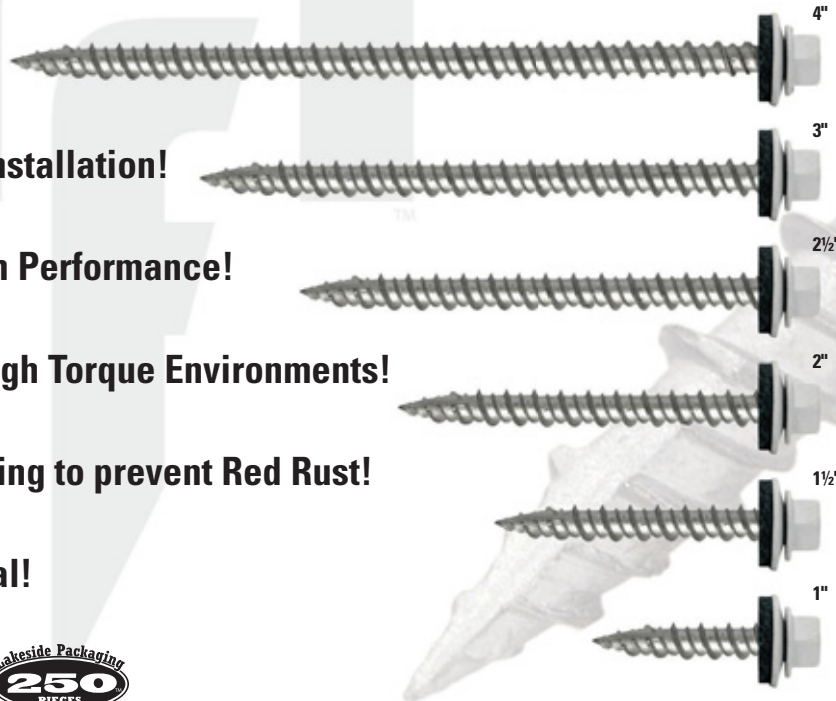
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setting of these structures.”

To prevent a failure during transportation, Distler said, “A sharp point screw would be better because the sharp point screw gets better bit engagement with the wood as opposed to a drill-point screw. The drill point screw would bore out the wood more so than the sharp point which would potentially result in the screws backing out of the wood and metal sheathing during transportation.”

To minimize failure, as with other structures, corrosion resistance is a critical factor to ensure a long-lasting shed. Be certain to use shed fasteners rated for outdoor exposure and for the materials being used. “Using interior grade fasteners on areas of a shed that are exposed to weather, water, salt, or chemicals can lead to a deterioration of fasteners which can result in failed connections,” Crawford said. “The use of corrosion-resistance fastener coatings and stainless steel can extend the life of a shed exposed to these environmental conditions.”

Distler agreed that since fasteners used in sheds will be exposed



PHOTO COURTESY OF DIRECT METALS, INC.

to the elements, “They will need to be specially coated to ensure they do not rust or corrode, and last a long time. Treated fasteners can also be used in pressure-treated wood, which you’ll need to use if you don’t intend to install siding on your shed.”

It’s not enough to look only at the fastener to prevent fastener failure. Quehl said the correct use of a high-speed installation tool is requisite, especially on a wood shed roof. “The popular impact drivers do not have a depth-sensing nosepiece or clutch, so it is easy to strip out a fastener in the thin, porous OSB used as the roofing substrate. This can lead to fastener backout or an eventual roof leak. A drill with a clutch mechanism or a screw gun with a depth-sensing nosepiece will help prevent this, as it can be pre-set to ensure a secure attachment.” **GSCB**

Shed Fastener Resources

Atlas Building Products

Ashland, Ohio
(800) 321-6846
www.atlasfasteners.com

Direct Metals Inc.

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SELECTING A BUILDING'S "SKIN"

Renovating With New Siding

BY LINDA SCHMID

Every project is different and every customer has their own ideas about what is important. However, if your customer is looking to you for help in choosing siding, you will want to be knowledgeable about a number of options, their performance and longevity. You will find a brief compendium of some of the popular siding choices available today.

Metal Siding

Metal siding is known for its resistance to the elements including moisture, fire, and insects as well as requiring minimal maintenance. Often an annual inspection is all that needs to be done.

The residential metal siding market is dominated by steel, galvanized and galvalume, but does feature some aluminum choices according to Niles Hickman, Product Manager at Edco Products. "Extremely high impact strength makes steel the industry leader for warranties tied to potential damage caused by nature – such as hail," he said.

"The largest differentiator between metal sidings on the market are the coatings utilized which generally coincide with the warranties extended with these products," Hickman said. "Some

manufacturers roll coat primer plus paint on one side, leaving the other side bare, while others apply primer coat to the second side."

Enamel coatings provide poor color retention and have generally been replaced with polyvinyl chloride (PVC) which usually comes with a 10-15 year fade protection guarantee. Due to the focus on longevity and sustainability, many people have moved to Silicone Modified Polyesters (SMPs). SMP coatings feature 20-35 years of fade protection on side walls. Poly vinylidene Fluoride (PVDF) is the top of the line in color retention with warranties offered between 30-50 years.

Which metal siding is chosen for a project has largely to do with the aesthetic choice of the building owner along with the price Hickman said. The performance of the siding is largely based on the metal type, thickness, and coating system.

Vinyl Siding

Vinyl siding provides long-lasting protections against the elements, including resistance to moisture, rot, and insect damage according to James Alpeter, Marketing Manager of Siding, Stone, and Roofing at ProVia. It is particularly known for its low maintenance requirements, usually an occasional cleaning for the sake of aesthetics is all that is required.

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“Vinyl siding offers a wide range of colors, styles, and textures, allowing homeowners to achieve their desired aesthetic,” Alpeter said. “Furthermore it is relatively easy to install, reducing labor costs and installation time.”

Vinyl is also a budget-friendly option that can last as long as 20-40 years if properly installed.

“While warranties vary between manufacturers, many include a lifetime warranty on chalk and fade,” Alpeter said.

Vinyl is a very popular choice for residential products, especially traditional clap or Dutch lap styles. More modern or specialized vinyl sidings are available to match the branding or style of retail and commercial buildings. These projects should give special consideration to wear and impact resistance, as well as an energy cost-reducing insulated vinyl siding option.

Wood Siding

Wood is an aesthetic many people enjoy, but it is biodegradable so it is more susceptible to damage like termites or weather, said Cameron Bailey, LP Building Solutions, Senior Brand Manager. Therefore, people turn to wood siding with enhancements.

Erica Goodnight, President and CEO at Union Grove Lumber said that wood products include hardboard, for example Duratemp which features a tough hardboard face with cedar texture and a strong plywood veneer inner core. A 50-year warranty comes with this siding option, which is hard to beat.

Another type of wood product features treating wood strands with a formula created of resins and borates. This siding may come with a 5-year-limited warranty on the labor and a 50-year-limited warranty on the substrate.” Longevity also depends on conditions according to Cameron Bailey, Senior Brand Manager at Louisiana Pacific (LP).

Traditional plywood is a common choice for sheds, Bailey said. A pressed wood strand product, however, lends a longer-lasting aesthetic.

Some of the sidings in this category are good choices for those who are looking for environmentally friendly options. LP SmartSide, for example, uses less carbon in the manufacturing process than the product retains; it’s carbon-negative siding.

Avoid Common Installation Errors

Metal & Vinyl Siding

- Make sure siding panels are not too tightly secured and they are secured in slotted flange holes allowing expansion and contraction with temperature fluctuations to avoid warping, buckling, and gaps between panels..

- Do not overlap panel butt joints too much. Allow for proper expansion and a good aesthetic.

- Take your time with flashing and caulking to ensure no moisture can penetrate.

- Take care to drive nails in straight without over-driving or there can be distortion in the panel which can lead to gaps, warping, or an insecurely attached panel..

Wood

- Make sure the boards are spaced appropriately to each other or that the shiplap is correctly overlapped as you fasten the siding to avoid gapping and waffling.

- Follow the recommended nail pattern and spacing.

- Do not place siding so it is in contact with the ground or it will deteriorate over time. Ensure there is ventilation to avoid rot.

All Siding

- Be sure to remove any protective film as soon as the panels are installed so that it does not become “baked on”.

- Follow the siding manufacturer’s guidelines and best practices to avoid these errors and others. Ask your manufacturer or a distribution partner to train you on proper installation.

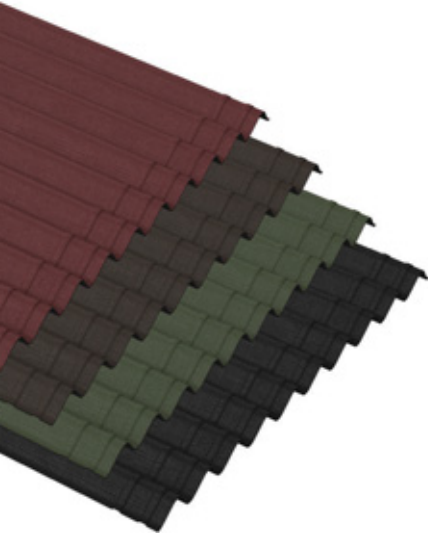
T1-11 siding is true wood, Goodnight said, pressure treated with a rough, grooved face and a plywood back. If used in climates with a lot of moisture present, a treated version is highly recommended to keep mold and decay at bay for as long as possible. All siding requiring painting or sealing requires special attention be paid to the siding edges to ensure that future swelling or delamination does not occur from moisture impeding those areas. This procedure will need to be repeated every few years. The siding generally comes with a full 5-year warranty with limited lifetime warranty. Decay is covered by the warranty, but mold and mildew is not.

There is a wood product for every project, Goodnight said. High end communities care about color and tend to like the product with the best warranty. Middle class community members tend to choose the more affordable, middle-warranty siding, Goodnight added.

The T1-11 is the most economical option and it has a rustic appeal that is very popular in some locales, such as mountainous and woody areas. **GSCB**

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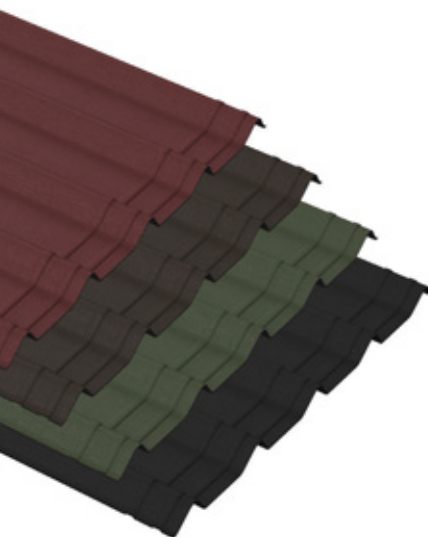


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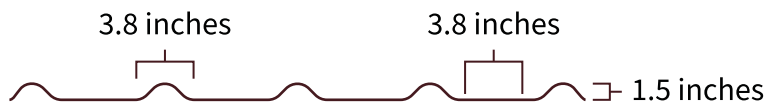
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Renovating With Stain

With a clear eye toward the future, Dr. Spencer and her family purchased their ‘forever home’ in the very mountains where she spent “nearly every weekend and free moment” of her childhood visiting her grandparents. A year-round tourist destination, Schroon Lake, New York is known as a four-season getaway in the eastern tier of the Adirondack Park.

Bought at auction, the home was in serious need of repair. In addition to researching the various exotic woods that Spencer used for the decking and siding, she also spent a great deal of time “Googling” the various high-performance, exterior wood stains available. She decided on Nova USA Wood Products and its ExoShield Wood Stains. The blend of Tung oil, UV blockers, fungicide, and trans-oxide pigments reduce cracking or warping, delay graying, and protect against water damage, for as little as 18 cents per square foot on tropical hardwoods like these.

Some of the Massaranduba boards were already pre-treated with the exterior wood finish of another brand, while others arrived unfinished. “The results really stood out,” Spencer said. “The rich red to brown coloring and beautiful straight grain of the Massaranduba siding popped even more after the ExoShield wood stain was applied in the late fall. The difference between the two finishes was even more apparent in the spring.”

Adirondack Peak Exteriors performed the majority of the home’s renovations and used ExoShield for the first time. “We



simply applied ExoShield to each deck and siding board and then waited about five minutes to buff it out with a rag,” owner Lee Suitter said.

Spencer did much of the staining, also, included applying ExoShield Walnut Wood Stain to the Ipe and Cumaru decking and Massaranduba siding, a 1:1 mix of ExoShield Walnut and Black Walnut Wood Stains on the railings and pine soffits, and Natural Wood Stain to the Tigerwood screened porch. “We expect that we’ll only have to repeat the process every two to four years,” she said. **GSCB**

Wood Siding: Painting & Staining Tips

By William A. Ramos
PPG Exterior Building Products Segment
Manager

Surface Preparation

Preparing wood is key to good adhesion and a quality finish and it starts with proper cleaning to remove dirt and debris.

- Remove old paint by scraping or sanding
- Gently clean wood manually with a brush and a quality cleaner
- Caulk seams and voids
- Prime all bare wood areas

Power of primer

Select a great primer that requires less effort to apply and ultimately helps

improve the durability of the paint, such as high-quality acrylic primer like PPG PERMANIZER®. If the wood variety is susceptible to tannin bleed, such as Western Cedar or Redwood, a tannin blocking primer such as PPG SEAL GRIP® should be utilized.

Watch the Weather

Weather is a key factor in overall paint quality. While painting can be performed outside of this range, the optimal outdoor temperatures are between 60-90° F.

- Painting or staining in direct sunlight or painting when the wood surface is too cold can lead to issues.
- Humidity can impact how quickly a paint dries so homeowners should follow

manufacturers recommendations for application.


Second Coat

Applying a second coat of paint is a step often skipped but it dramatically increases the life of the paint and provides an additional layer of protection. Sufficient drying time, based on the paint specifications, is critical in this process.

Additional Staining Tips

When it comes to staining wood siding and trim, it is important to stain edge to edge of two to three panels at time to keep the application line “wet” until the siding panel is complete to avoid creating a visible “dry line.” **GSCB**

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Tape Measures & Speed Squares

Tips and Tricks So You Can Cut Once

BY JACOB PRATER

There are loads of useful tools out there and I love them all, but I have been limited by the editors to only discussing two this time even though each of these two merits an article all by itself. This go-around it is tape measures and speed squares: tips and tricks surrounding their exactitude and utility for efficient and effective layout and cutting resulting in quality construction.

“National Tape Measure Day” is held every July 14. There is some amazing history to this simple tool, but I will keep this short. James Chesterman had been making metal hoops for hoop skirts, they went out of fashion and he was left with a bunch of “flat wire.” He made lemonade with his lemons in 1829 and the tape measure was born. Next July 14, raise your glass of whatever libation seems fitting and have some gratitude that hoop skirts went out of style so you don’t have to wear them or look at them and you have a tape measure! After this simple innovation of a steel tape measure, many more people made innovations to get us to the modern tape measure with all of its hidden uses and frills.

Important Measurements

As you of course know full well, measurements are critically important for quality construction. The precision of these measurements is more or less important depending on the particular task. While every measurement involves uncertainty (most tape measures are Class 2 and will be within 2.3 mm for each 10 m or $<3/32$ nds per every 32 feet 9 ½ inches); this uncertainty can accumulate and inaccuracies can add up (the tape is more accurate than most of our technique). For this reason, when it matters, making measurements from one point along a layout to place studs, for instance, is better than measuring from one to the next and then from that one to the next one.

The first method, stretching the tape out and marking every 16 inches on center doesn’t create compounded measurement error whereas measuring from each to the next will introduce more error into every measurement. Let’s put this idea in broader context. I was once presented with a research article and question of the same title, “How long is the British coastline?” The answer to this is quite perplexingly, “it depends”. And it

depends on how long your ruler is. This is partly to the point of the above explanation and also a bit of trivia for you, but if your ruler or tape measure in this case is infinitesimally small then you can measure greater contours along said coast and so the length of the British coastline is everything from infinity on down to something that makes some sort of reasonable sense or about 11,000 miles (Great Britain mainland).

This is of course an extreme example, but you get the idea; stretch that tape out for accurate interval measurements. Or at least think about having a 25-foot tape for most things (your “pocket tape” can be short, and yes just like a pocket knife everyone should have a “pocket tape”).

Accurate and Repeatable

While being able to measure things rapidly is desirable it is more important that they are accurate and repeatable. So let's see how you can make accurate, repeatable measurements. When stretching the tape out for measurements at intervals you are the beneficiary of a couple innovative additions to the tape measure. Beyond that beautiful end clip that adjusts for inside and outside



The author wound up with two studs over the center door (oops).

measurements by sliding on some rivets, there are some extra markings on the tape in addition to the regular foot and inch marks. There are the red numbers for multiples of 16 inches for

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Above, some tapes have a black diamond at 19 3/16" related to truss installation. Below, you can see two quality brands that agree with each other, and a cheap tape that's off. Top right: Use the housing length and stop trying to bend the tape into corners.



stud layout and there are the little black diamonds at intervals of 19 3/16 inches for marking layout for joists and trusses.

While most of us will pick up 16, 32, 48, 64, 80, 96 pretty quick that whole multiples of 19 3/16 isn't going to happen. So thankfully we have these additional markings on the tape to speed up layout and help keep us from making mistakes or miscalculations. Many tapes will also have extra red marks to tell the number of inches past the most recent foot mark. All of this aids in making good measurements the first time, but it never hurts to double check a measurement before you make a cut.

All accurate layouts and thus later construction best start with a good drawing and subsequent proper layout. Having been out with a couple contractors to do this it goes quite rapidly with tape measure and string line. [Quick Thought: Have you ever laid everything out on a

slab and had the rain wash it away? Save your time and work by spraying clear finish over your chalk lines and never deal with that again.]

Even in the best cases there still can be hiccups and corrections that must be made (roughed in plumbing in a poured slab isn't always exactly where you wanted it to be). More troublesome than new layouts with drawings are concept projects (I am guilty of these) where you know what you want and sort of have a layout in your mind, or renovation and retrofitting. In every case make sure that you have accurate measurements and layout markings where you want them or else you end up wasting time redoing things (that time is money) or dealing with an outcome that wasn't quite what you wanted.

I have done this with a greenhouse I am building along my garage. I carefully laid out the studs 2 feet on-center from



each corner of the wall that will have a wide double door. That looked good, so I marked the top of that wall's plate for the studs going up to the roof line and was nailing them in only to get to the center (which I hadn't marked over the door as there weren't studs below) and realized that the bottom plate of that wall at the base wasn't exactly 20 feet wide (oops). I ended up with two studs in the center above the door rather than starting over. Lesson learned and in this case little or no harm done except to my pride.

When working with 2X lumber, one can also use the hook of the tape to make markings by scratching the wood with it. These aren't as easy to see as pencil marks, but you might not have your other hand free or forgot a pencil. You can always follow this up with a pencil mark, but in a pinch it'll do and it might save you some time especially if you are marking and cutting at a miter saw. That end clip will do more still, as most modern tapes have a screw or nail slot in the clip that can be used to make serviceable circles in a pinch. Simply put a nail or screw at the center hook then clip on it with the head in the little slot and hold your pencil at the correct radius length and start turning.

One Last Tape Tip

Ever tried to make that inside measurement and tried to bend the tape to



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Aligning the heel cut, above. At right is a jig that you can make yourself.

get that exact number? My father-in-law with 50+ years of experience still does this! Well, QUIT IT! If you are using a quality tape, the housing length will be marked on the back of the housing. Make your measurement and add the housing length, done. On my favorite tape, that I always seem to leave somewhere, this is simply 3 inches and easy measurement to add to what the tape reads.

Another incredibly useful tool is the speed square, also called a rafter square. This ingenious tool will not only help you mark 90 and 45 degree angles and provide a cutting guide for your circle saw (that's just beginner stuff) it will also help you mark multiple angles (by degrees or roof pitch), scribe lines for rip cuts, and mark cuts for common rafters, and hip and valley rafters as well as layout stairs. I am sure that there are many more creative uses for one of these as well, especially if they are linked up with another tool (level, plumb bob, etc. ...).

Speed squares have a ruler up one side a flange on the other (both of these sides at 90 degrees to each other) and then along the hypotenuse of the triangle are some markings. The outside long edge gives you a mark for degrees and the slot then gives you pitch for common (rafters – cutting the ends for joining at the ridge or at the ends for fascia boards) and hip/valley (for

getting the pitch right for hip and valley rafters). The pitch in the common scale is per 12 feet with a 6 there representing a 6:12 pitch or 6 feet of rise per 12 feet of run.

The key here is to use the pivot on the square correctly. Watching a video on youtube.com or having someone show you is really the best way here, but I will give it a go with words and a picture. Mark your 90-degree line, now pivot on the corner of the square (some are marked “pivot”) where the flange is until the edge of the board that was along the flange aligns with your desired angle or pitch of cut.

Next you can scribe lines for rip cuts (along the grain of the wood or along the length of a board as opposed to across it). To do this simply hold your pencil on the ruler of the square at the right mark (some have nice recesses for this, but it'll work either way) and slide the flange along the long edge of the board and voila. This works out to the size of your square. What do you do when you need this bigger? Well, I have seen this done but then

couldn't do it well myself. Maybe my hands aren't steady enough or I lack the skill, but some people (over 50 years of experience on the guy I watched do it) can run a tape down the edge of sheet goods while holding a pencil at the end of it and scribe a “perfect enough” line for ripping that OSB or plywood to dimension, just like that. Us mere mortals pull out the tape mark the ends and get out the string line. Slower, yes, but it's the best I can do.

A speed square can also be used to cut bird's mouths for rafters to bear on the tops of walls. Oh, how I wish I had known this trick when I was cutting these for my log cabin rafters. It doesn't take much time to become facile at cutting bird's mouths. You lay out the heel cut like you would a rafter end, mark that, and then use the square to

stay 90 degrees to that and find the edge of the board at the distance you need for the wall bearing surface (3 ½ inches for 2' x 4'). Want to speed it up more? Make a marking jig. This is basically a short rafter with the ridge cut, birds mouth, and end cut all on a short piece of wood. Jigs like this take a little time to make, but save huge amounts of time the more that you use them on the job. Just make all the cuts on the bottom end of the jig to scale for the overhang of the roof.

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Growing To Maturity

With Identi-Grow

BY LINDA SCHMID

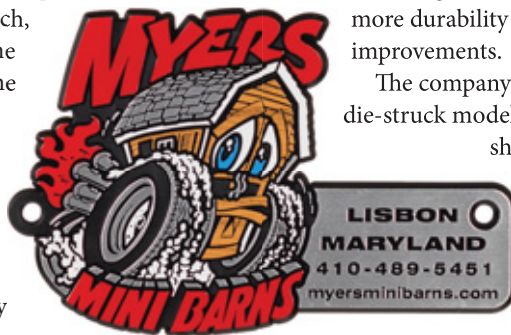
A Seed Is Planted

Sometimes a small piece of a business shows such potential that it takes over. That's what happened to Jon Lee. In 1997, he was working in promotional products, mainly rubber art stamps. One day a preacher building sheds on the side approached him and asked for a little sign to put on the sheds he built. He did some research, found a solution, and the preacher became his first customer. Lee reached out to some other garage builders and got them hooked. The building-nameplate part of the business grew slowly from there, until about 2014 when Lee decided he needed to get serious about Identi-Grow. He sold the rubber stamp business in 2018 and concentrated all of his energy on nameplates.

Once he decided to focus on building nameplates, he began looking for places to advertise and put some resources into getting the name out in front of shed builders. Trade shows were an important part of building brand recognition as were several advertising mediums including GSC Builder.

Name Your Plate

In recent years, people have become more focused on aesthetics, so the quality of the plate representing their brand has become more important. "Twenty years ago, if the plate had a name and an address on it, that was all people cared about," Lee said. "Now the focus is more and more on making names and brands stand out. That is why so many people have reinvented their logos."



A Full-Color Logo Nameplate

Meanwhile, the ink industry has gone through a revolution with government focus on safety and sustainability, which has impacted the durability and colorfastness of ink. Lee said that the inks and coatings that they were left with were not up to Identi-grow's standards, so he did a lot of work, searching for and testing different inks and coatings. They have much more durability now, but he is still always looking for improvements.

The company has no "signature" nameplate. "The die-struck model looks like it's engraved so it's very sharp," Lee said, "but it's not for everyone. We try to help builders get the model that is right for their logo, goals, and budgets."

Lee acknowledges that there are a variety of shed manufacturers; therefore there are a variety of nameplates. Some manufacturers have a business model of making a lot of sheds quickly and inexpensively, selling them at low prices and knowing they won't be around for many years. Others focus on high-quality buildings that will last a long time. Some wish for a simple one-color, non-intrusive plate while others desire to capture the full effect of their color logo. Identi-Grow has plates to meet each of these needs.

Identi-Culture

"By most peoples' standards, our culture is pretty laid back," Lee said. "But it depends on orders. One day it's laid back and the next day we're scrambling."

Lee cites the beginning of the year as the busiest time. "In January or February when people start to come out of



A Die-Struck Nameplate

hibernation, we're really moving. That's when there's more to do than there are hours in a day."

Identi-Grow is based in Port Republic, Virginia, but they ship across the lower 48 states free. Lee said that he and son Wendell Lee also ship to Canada, and they will gladly ship to just about anywhere a customer would like, but the shipping can get expensive outside of the 48 he said.

Growing Pains

One of Lee's continuing challenges is knowing where the market is going. "Sometimes you think something is going to be big and you start thinking about investing in equipment for it, and then you realize it's not really going like you thought it would," he said. "That's why I don't do anything in too much of a hurry; it's better to let things push you a little bit instead of moving too far too fast and finding yourself in trouble."

Philosophy

Lee's business philosophy is aligned with his faith. He explained it like this, "First, I treat everyone like I want to be treated. Second, I remember everything belongs to God; it's not all about me. Thirdly, if I have food and raiment, I need to be content. And finally, everybody wants to grow, but I don't feel the overwhelming urge to try to win over the whole world. Others need to eat, too."

Lee also has advice: Treat the customer who is ordering 25 widgets the same way you treat the customer who is ordering 25,000 widgets. If you are helpful to a baby company, then when it has grown into a larger company, the people will still want to talk to you.

Industry Rewards and Moving into the Future

"We have customers that are very loyal, and we are very happy about that. We work hard to please and I think it shows," Lee said. "We are up-front with customers about what to expect. We try to under-promise and over-deliver. When the customer is happy, everybody is happy."

"We've done well in the nameplate business," Lee said, "even COVID didn't shut us down. We figured either everyone would

go into starvation mode and everything would shut down, OR they would think about the things they want to do, like getting nice patio furniture and building the new deck or that new shed they'd been thinking about. The latter happened, and the market was wide open in 2020.

"I don't expect the market to be that good going forward," Lee said, "but people will always need sheds to store things and there is potential for growth in the industry."

As far as Identi-grow is concerned, Lee says that they will continue to strive for improvement. "How can we do it more efficiently? How can we improve durability? How can we turn jobs around faster? These are the important questions for us."

And while Lee may not be looking for great growth, these are the kinds of questions that tend to lead a company down that path right along with their customers. **GSCB**

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High-End ADUs

Add Glam Garages and Premium Detached Spaces to Your Product Line

BY ROCKY LANDSVERK

Studio Shed was founded in 2008 as a brand focused on high-end storage sheds. It didn't take long before the team learned there was a market in small-but-classy studios, home offices, and even residential detached spaces that can be made from kits but are luxurious in every way.

So like barndos, which are basically a combination of barns and homes, there's

now an active market for "glam garages" that combine garages and homes, and often they're constructed using a prefab kit.

"I am actually working in what you could call a glam garage," said Jeremy Nova, co-founder and creative director of Studio Shed. "About half of it is a 500-square-foot, two-car garage, and then the other half of it is a 500-square-foot studio.

"We are definitely seeing a trend of

people adding some type of flexible living space, such as a detached studio or converting a garage to create a multifunctional building."

Nova pointed out that the idea isn't all that new. Carriage houses were around long ago, and having a guest house or area over the top of a garage isn't a new idea, either. But these spaces are different in many ways than what we have ever seen before. And Studio Shed has seen



an increase not only in the sheer volume of requests for these types of spaces, but also a higher consumer demand to build larger, more flexible spaces such as Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).

Accessory Dwelling Units

In addition to a range of detached spaces, Studio Shed specializes in Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Here is Studio Shed's own definition of an ADU, from its website:

An accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, is an additional living space on your property, most commonly in your backyard. ADUs are popular home additions because they can be optimized to fit your needs. Whether you call it a granny flat, cottage, casita or in-law suite, an ADU comes in many sizes and styles. Their detached nature means you can expand your living space without the hassle of home construction or remodeling.

One of the biggest questions about ADUs is where do they fall, from a zoning standpoint? Are they considered "residential" and require all the approvals that a home would? "It varies a lot by mu-

nicipality," Nova said. "But typically, you really cross over a threshold of zoning when you add plumbing. That generally bumps you into a different category on a zoning level.

"For example, people that are doing a garage or studio space that is insulated and it has electric, that is closer to a garage building permit than a dwelling or construction building permit. But once you add plumbing, that's typically what tips you into another category."

What's encouraging, from both a manufacturing standpoint and from the viewpoint of people who are concerned about the housing shortage, is that — perhaps out of necessity — many areas of the country are approving ADUs in residential-zoned areas.

"Communities are really embracing [ADUs]," Nova said. "Of course, there's obviously a lot of housing pressure across the country because there are not enough rental units. So maybe in part because of the housing pressure, communities have finally embraced the idea of letting people add some residential density to a single-family home."

Nova explained that "neighborhoods are finding that adding density with ADUs is preferable to multi-family in-fill. And communities are generally liberalizing the zoning rules to put something like a guest house or an accessory dwelling unit on a property. And it's very often that people want that integrated to a garage, so that's a big focus for us right now, and the two trends go well together.

"People might want that garage space, but they want some flexible living space attached to it. Those logically can really live nicely together in the same building. And renovation is a popular component of the trend, too — turning a shed or a barn or a garage into something more, adding some portion of flexible living space is definitely a housing trend as well."

Financing for ADUs

Ben Eichsteadt is National Sales Director for EZ Pay Buildings, which specializes in rent-to-own loans. We asked him for clarification on financing options for ADU customers. Can they get traditional mortgages? The short answer seems to be "No." Likewise, Studio Shed mentions a couple places to get loans for ADUs on its website, and the options are either a) unsecured personal loans or b) home equity loans tied to your actual residence.

Like Nova, Eichsteadt said what qualifies as "residential" changes depending on who you ask. "In my space, we are rent to own, and if it's the sole structure at a mailing address, that generally qualifies as residential," Eichsteadt said. "There are some caveats. There can be addresses that have a driveway to a field, and it's just an ag field, but if there's a driveway and mailbox and a metal building at the end, that's probably residential." He said some people consider a property "residential" if you add plumbing.

"We specifically state in our contract that you can't live in the structure," Eichsteadt said about his specific company's policy. "I understand that people sometimes do [live in them], and we don't know it."

We asked him to help us understand why it is so difficult to get traditional home financing for an ADU. Eichsteadt said it's because that while the structure is residential by name, and includes plumbing and electrical, it's also mobile, and if you unhook a few things, that ADU or cabin built on skids can be moved.

He has seen this play itself out. "I understand why traditional financing people have difficulty with people wanting to get financing [for ADUs]," Eichsteadt said. "They can be moved at any time. That is something that we run into a lot. We will finance a cabin shell, and then people fill that out later. Oftentimes they have moved that building, sometimes even to a place that is inaccessible," making repossession impossible.



Adding Prefab to Your Business

Builders and contractors are going to be naturally skeptical about incorporating these into their sales mix. Nova said there will be a learning curve, of course. “We have about 60 GC partners all over the country that do installations for us, and they really like the model,” he said. “Field construction goes faster, so they can get onto the next job.”

So whether this is a standalone job in between larger revenue projects, or is a bolt-on to an existing order for some extra revenue, in either case it can be quick revenue. “You can put a bigger margin on those type of items for customers,” Nova said. “And it is pretty typical construction techniques that people are familiar with; from a structural level, there’s nothing that’s really far outside the box. And we have an installation department with an onboarding process for new builders.”

Selling the High End

What is Nova’s advice to builders who are working with, and for, people who have serious money? “The expectation of customer service is very high,” he said. “We have a dedicated customer-experience team that works closely with our customers through the front end of the process including the design and scale of the project, zoning and permit requirements and setbacks. And we seek a high level of professionalism in our builders for the same reason.” **GSCB**

Labor’s Impact on Outbuildings

Builders and contractors need to start seriously considering whether they want to start selling ADUs. Labor shortages might be making that decision for them. Framers are getting particularly hard to find. “We work really well for a small-company builder,” Nova said of his company’s prefabs. “We pull a lot of the framing out of the field into the factory, and in a lot of high-cost areas in the country, qualified framers have become very expensive. That field labor has become very expensive. Pulling that piece out of the field and into the factory has a lot of advantages.

“You may need only one truly talented carpenter, and then one more apprentice. So I think [modular] is something that complements the landscape, as opposed to a technological replacement for labor. You still need that labor in the field. It’s just that you need less of it.”

High-End or Affordable or Both?

So does this modular, mixed-use trend impact the high end or the low end of the market? It’s a bit of both but this product is really higher-end and urban than low-end and rural, in large part because these are high-quality buildings aimed at people who want smaller, “affordable” luxury. When there is sheathing used it is the high-quality Huber Engineered Woods ZIP System, and the doors and windows are also high-quality products from Marvin.

“You wouldn’t call this inexpensive,” Nova said. “For 800 square feet or 1,000 square feet, that garage or accessory dwelling unit might cost you \$200,000, and that’s a meaningful amount of money. But that’s just the nature of home construction right now. We do strive to keep it pretty accessible, but we are not competitive with the lowest end of the market; we’re not a trailer home.”

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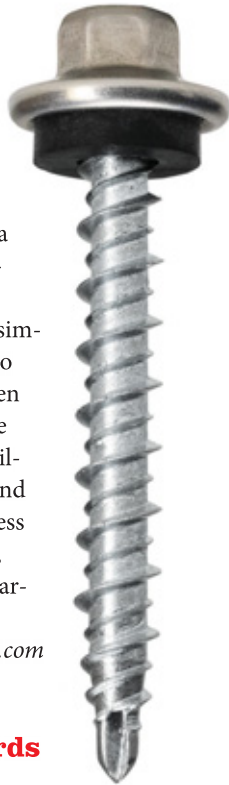
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The roof paneling is the company's “premium vertical roof,” meaning it is oriented vertically. The building is certified for wind loads up to 140 mph and snow loads up to 30 psf.

Quality materials are important when building something this size with those

load requirements. Among them used on this project are Levi's Building Components and the all-important fasteners.

The homeowner handled the pouring of the foundation themselves. Posts and trusses are 14g galvanized steel square tubing provided by American Building Network while the metal panels (sides and roofs) are sourced via ABN as well but are 29g. Trying to count the double-hung windows? That's 27 total. **GSCB**

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If you have any questions about the Project of the Month, contact the editor:

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The Details:

Builder: LC Contracting LLC

Size: 54' x 31' x 16/9

Roof Pitch: 4/12 center section
2/12 side sections

Roll-up Doors: Asta America 10'x10' automatic roll-up doors (2) with header seals and Dutch 45 cuts, 10'x8' roll-up doors (2) with header seals and Dutch 45 cuts, 8'x8' roll-up doors (2) with header seals and Dutch 45 cuts

Fasteners:

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Insulation:

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Posts and Trusses: American Building Network 14g galvanized steel square tubing

Roof and Wall Panels: American Building Network 29g galvanized steel paneling (vertical) with Sherwin Williams Valspar color applied

Windows: Reliabilt 36" x 36" premium double-hung (27 total)

Walk-in Doors: Blevins 9-Lite Premium



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Building Your Message

Superior Sheds Focuses on Building a Quality Product, Expanding Its Dealer Network

BY SHANNON LATHAM, THE SHED GEEK



The intersection of McAlister Road and Beaverdam Road in Williamston, South Carolina, just southeast of Greenville, South Carolina, may look like every ordinary stop-and-go in rural America. However, this intersection has one thing many intersections don't have: Superior Sheds.

Superior Sheds is owned by Sheree Holmes, and she has had quite the journey to being a female shed manufacturer in an otherwise male-dominated industry. After working in the medical field for years, Sheree was offered a sales/marketing opportunity with Cox Builders Group and things just haven't been the same since. After accepting the position and spending a few years growing the shed side of Cox Builders Group, Sheree was given the opportunity to purchase the shed side of the business in March of 2022, which began to differentiate itself from the general contracting assignments.

Cox Builders Group began in 1988, and it focused on building utility buildings as a vertical integrated company, selling to the

Williamston natives. After years of owning the business, the original owner then sold it to a new partner who was the visionary who saw that hiring Sheree would help bring back to life the shed brand; he was absolutely pleased with the decision. With a focus on general contracting, the shed side of the business went from being a secondary product to a robust portion of Cox Builders Group.

Hiring Sheree into her role as sales/marketing coordinator (where she flourished) ultimately led to a path to ownership of the shed side now known as Superior Sheds. Along with her team, Sheree has focused on a wholesale dealer model that has allowed Superior Sheds to maintain the integrity of a quality product while allowing dealers to focus on becoming a premium dealer proud to offer a superior shed.

The Shed Geek was able to ask Sheree a round of Q&A to know more about Superior Sheds. Let's see what she had to say about her journey and the makeup of Superior Sheds.

What Products and Services Do You Provide?

"We specialize in traditional storage sheds with an A-Frame roof, barn-style gambrel roofs, and some economy-style metal buildings. We also have a line of dog kennels and gazebos for shoppers who are looking for a quality product that goes beyond even storage. Our highly skilled carpenters can provide many products that meet the demand of shoppers who visit the shed lot."

What is Your Current Territory?

"Although we are growing, and seeking growth opportunities outside the Palmetto state, our current reach has a dealer market that services upstate South Carolina."

What is the Current Business Climate in Your Area?

"South Carolina is no stranger to the shed business, which is something I found out right away while growing the sales/marketing side of Cox Builders Group before taking over ownership

of the company. I was surprised at how inclusive the industry is. While we have a fair number of dealers and manufacturers that sell a similar product, we have all been able to diversify our products and focus on our own markets. Sure, there are some common areas where there is potential for many shed lots to service the same customer, however, our growth seems to be unbothered, and it's only an occasional situation. We have been fans of our competitors, and it seems they have been fair to us. We wish them well, we just focus on effectively communicating to the customer our branding, which is an intense focus on quality products."

What is Your Primary Customer Base?

"We have serviced customers in each area of residential, agricultural, commercial, and light industrial. The key is to use the dealer network we have established to deliver a message that we can accommodate the homeowner looking for a backyard storage shed for their lawn mower but also a larger-scale farming operation needing storage for farming implements."

How Do You Differentiate Yourself From Your Competitors?

"As mentioned, South Carolina has many shed sellers. With a constant need for additional storage, it's understandable how manufacturers would seek South Carolina as an area of focus. Our population seems to be growing, and we have an influx of transplants from other states. With the addition of increased housing comes opportunity for a shed seller to help the homeowner with storage needs. We too have seen the need for more storage which is why we were able to break away from just general contracting to focus on making Superior Sheds its own entity. We just try to do that with a focus on quality and aesthetics. Creating a beautiful and functional building meant to last seems to resonate with what stor-



age shoppers are looking for. We really make sure to focus on attention to detail."

Tell Us the Challenges the Company Has Overcome, and How Did You Do That?

"Our biggest battle to overcome was buying the business at the worst time. The economy was beginning to see massive changes, from incredible inflation to a general slowdown for housing and therefore sheds. The shed industry had just gone through two dynamite years of sheds sales during COVID, and inventory had basically been depleted, and shoppers' appetite was suppressed through all the record sales. We had to focus on reaching every shed shopper out there with our product until things began to level out. Since then, we have established a steady upward projectory of sales and manufacturing, making sure to grow healthy, and not try to do too much too quickly."

Similarly, to What Do You Owe the Success of Your Business?

"We honestly learned that quality

products help to sell themselves. If the sales process is done correctly and the salesperson believes in the product, and can transfer that belief to the shed shopper, then we feel it was a successful exchange. The quality of the product does not suffer if the buyer does not recognize its value more than price alone. It really helped me to focus on growing the sales/marketing for Superior Sheds in the beginning. That was able to help me establish what the company was all about. Though it's been said a thousand times, we really are happy to provide customers with a solid product"

What Would You Tell Yourself Five Years Ago If You Could?

"Everything will be OK. Five years ago, I was terrified to leave a steady career with a guaranteed income to pursue a job that required me to work on commission. If I could tell myself anything it would be to take the leap, trust the process, and believe in your work ethic, and ability to adapt and overcome. Even in a male-dominated industry, I have been able to find my place."

What is Your Advice to Somebody Who is Brand New in Your Line of Business?

“If you feel like this is something you want to do, it is a very rewarding line of work, but you must love what you do, because if you do not it will show. Your dealers, your coworkers, your customers, and your competition will know that you do not love what you do. That will show up in your work habits, and products. If you don't like it don't fake it until you make it. Instead, find what you do like and go for it.”

Where Do You See the Biggest Opportunities in the Coming Months? Coming Years?

“Sheds have become so versatile. For

years, a shed was just traditional storage, used for lawn mowers and garden tools. Now, there are multiple uses for sheds. I think that is an area we need to focus on more. I have a friend with a 12'x16' Superior Shed they use for a music room. We love to go to music concerts on our travels so for us it has come full circle. We love to know that he is perfecting his craft and enjoying his hobby, and that in turn entertains many people.”

Where Do You See the Biggest Challenges in the Coming Months? Coming Years?

“Getting to the next level. We are ready to expand and to grow but we are careful to make sure to do so with the right people and taking the right opportuni-

ties. It is imperative to grow with your business, and we are only as good as our team. We want to grow healthy, and in a way we can look back on and appreciate, that starts with the right people.”

What Are the Things That You Are Not Good at and Would Love To Learn More About?

“Social media! Trying to navigate the complexity of the always growing social forums. From IG and FB to X (formerly known as Twitter) to threads and every other social platform. Shoppers are changing the way they shop, and we are trying to keep up.”

What Are Three Things to Which You Attribute Your Success?

“In no particular order, 1) selling a quality product that you can be proud to sell is paramount. 2) Being able to help dealers on their journey, and 3) honesty. These are three areas we want to be associated with the Superior brand.”

What Are Your Business Goals for the Future? Plans for Expansion?

“Yes, yes, and yes, we plan to expand. Our next phase of expansion is to build a dealer network in NE Georgia, and Western North Carolina. We want to continue to focus on being a manufacturer who can provide a quality product so dealers can focus on being a quality dealer.”

Tell Us About Your Company Culture and Business Philosophy

“Our culture is to walk together. Not only with our dealer network but also our shop workers. We buy lunch for the crew regularly, and love to celebrate birthdays with the builders. While experiencing the unfortunate and rare dilemma known as turnover, one of our workers recently encouraged us by saying, “why would anyone not want to work here, this is the best place I've ever worked.” **GSCB**

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GSCB OCT/NOV 2023



To Discount or Not to Discount?

That Is One of the Questions for the Storage Shed Industry

BY MATTHEW BLACK, BLACKS BUILDINGS & MYSHED.IO

In the world of storage sheds, a debate has been quietly bubbling away: to discount or not to discount? The landscape of this industry ranges from low-cost, easily assembled options to high-end, custom-built units. As with any industry, the approach to pricing is a strategic decision that can profoundly influence a company's brand, customer perception, and bottom line.

The Allure of Discounts

Increased Sales

The most obvious reason to offer

discounts is to increase sales. Lower prices can attract budget-conscious consumers or those who may have been on the fence about making a purchase. Special promotions can also encourage existing customers to upgrade or buy additional units.

Inventory Management

Overstock can be a nightmare for shed companies, especially for those with limited storage space. Discounts help to move inventory quickly, making room for new models and reducing overhead costs associated with keeping unsold units.

Customer Loyalty

Promotions and discounts can also serve to build customer loyalty. A well-timed discount can turn a one-time buyer into a repeat customer, especially if they are pleased with their discounted purchase.

The Downside of Discounts

Profit Margins

Discounting, by definition, eats into profits. This is particularly challenging for companies specializing in high-quality, custom sheds. For them, the cost of materials and labor doesn't decrease just

because the selling price does.

Brand Image

Heavy or frequent discounting can dilute a brand’s image. In the world of storage sheds, where durability and quality are paramount, maintaining a premium image is essential for attracting discerning customers willing to invest in top-of-the-line options.

Price Wars

Once one company starts discounting, competitors often feel compelled to follow suit. This can lead to price wars, shrinking profits for everyone involved and potentially destabilizing the market.

**Shed University
Going Live Soon**

Matthew Black’s Shed University course website will be live soon.

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**A No-Discount Policy:
The Case for Steady Pricing
Consistent Margins**

Without the pressure of offering discounts, companies can maintain a consistent profit margin. This financial stability often allows them to reinvest in the business, perhaps by developing innovative features or investing in quality materials.

Brand Integrity

Holding firm on pricing helps to establish a brand as reliable and high-quality. In the long run, this could attract a loyal customer base willing to pay a premium for perceived value.

Simplified Marketing and Operations

A no-discount policy simplifies both marketing and operations by removing the need to continually adjust strategies and pricing models.

Striking a Balance

It’s clear that both approaches have

merits. Some companies may opt for a hybrid strategy, offering occasional discounts while generally maintaining steady prices. This can capture a broader range of consumers, satisfying both those looking for a deal and those willing to pay for quality.

So, to discount or not to discount? The answer, it seems, is as varied as the sheds themselves. What remains constant is the need for each company to weigh these considerations carefully, in light of the company’s specific circumstances and

goals. The right strategy can spell the difference between a full inventory gathering dust and a thriving business meeting the diverse needs of today’s storage shed consumers. **GSCB**

Matthew Black is owner of My Shed (mysshed.io), which offers a software platform and business management products to help shed business owners succeed. If you have any questions or topic suggestions, email him at Matt@mysshed.io.

Sales: The Power of a Script

By Chris Pittman
Pittman Academy
pittmanacademy.com

The reason why a GPS exists today for drivers is to make it *easier* and *faster* to get to a destination. What is there to use in the sales world to make for an easier and faster? The answer is a script. With a script not only can you close faster and easier, but you will be able to *control the process* and repeat the process to scale your business, which will be your *proven method* to close deals.

Let’s talk about *not* having a script and doing what most amateur sales dealers do: wing the conversation or pitch based on “talent” and/or “experience.” When you do this you put yourself in a position to not predict what will come next in the process and cause you to have an unwanted conversation and/or to stall the deal all in one.

One thing I love to say is “a winged pitch will get you winged results” — which you will never control and so your income will always be one you can’t control, either. It will also bring forward every dealer’s best friend, **Mr. Fluff**.

Mr. Fluff Definition: The filler conversation you do either when getting

to know someone or when there is a pause in the conversation that makes people feel awkward. In other words, when you beat around the bush (lack of control) because you don’t really know or understand what to say. That will bring forward uncertainty. You will then transmit the uncertainty into your prospect and they will be *uncertain about doing business you with*.

Having a script gives you the ability to become a professional in the art of selling by having something concrete you can use to *train* and know if you are growing and developing. It allows you to hold yourself accountable, too. The best athletes and actors all have scripts to go over and practice before showtime — which helps ensure they will be on track to execute.

Do not leave anything up to chance, luck, or talent. Leave it up to how trained you are as a professional with skill sets you have developed to close the deals. Make sure the next time you are in front of a prospect you know what to say, it is well rehearsed, you feel confident, can predict what will happen, you will look, sound and feel like a professional. By doing that you and the prospect can both enjoy the process and experience and obtain the goal. They Buy and you *Close*.



S-5! Partners with the University of Kansas School of Architecture & Design

S-5! has partnered with the University of Kansas School of Architecture & Design to provide a donation of snow retention and solar attachments for its annual student-led, design-build project.

The 432 Indiana Street House is the 16th consecutive LEED Platinum project completed by Studio 804, a hands-on learning program at the University of Kansas for graduate students in their final year of studies seeking a Master of Architecture degree. Founded in 1995 by Professor Dan Rockhill, each year students design, procure and execute a complete house in just nine months. The 1,800-square-foot home and adjacent 500-square-foot accessory dwelling unit is located in the historic Pinkney Neighborhood, one of the oldest in the city of Lawrence, Kansas.

“Each year, we complete a house or a university-related commercial building, alternating between standing seam roof and flat roof projects,” said Rockhill. “For each metal roof project, we incorporate S-5! Normally, we prefer a pitched roof form and a high gable roof to take advantage of the full interior height without interruption to the floor plan, so directly attaching the PVKIT to the standing seams makes our job quite easy in comparison to the alternative flat roof system, which requires a fairly expensive support system. Integrating into the standing seam saves us thousands of dollars, and

S-5! is quick and easy to install.”

The students had clearly defined sustainability goals and set out to achieve LEED platinum status with a solar PV mounting system that provided a simple, economical and penetration-free method for attachment of modules to the roof. S-5! donated its PVKIT direct-attach solar mounting system to mount a 16-panel solar array of Q-Cell Q. Peak Duo 400W modules to the 24-gauge matte black standing seam metal roof. The system is expected to offset approximately 85% of the homeowner’s energy consumption.

Ambassador Supply Acquires Straight Line Metal Buildings

Ambassador Supply has acquired Straight Line Metal Buildings, a Brookshire, Texas-based company that manufactures and installs pre-engineered metal buildings. This acquisition strengthens both companies’ commitments to providing high-quality products and comprehensive services to their partners. Straight Line Metal Buildings offers the ultimate in general purpose and pre-engineered metal buildings, steel homes, mini-storage buildings, modular offices, components, and more.

“We’ve been searching for the right opportunity within the metal building space for some time, and the combination of geographic location, thoughtful business practices, and comprehensive customer service made Straight Line Metal Buildings the perfect fit,” said Ambassador Supply CEO Brad Crawford.

Mickey Launches New Division to Assist Builders

Mickey, a B2B technology company, has launched Mickey | Contractor Direct, a new division focused on assisting builders, construction firms, and contractors with building project order fulfillment— from product procurement to shipping updates and online payment functionality. This new division will further expand Mickey’s construction and building material reach by helping more contractors source the supplies they need in one platform – all powered by “Mickey OS,” the company’s proprietary technology. Contractors and builders will be able to track their quotes and contracts, and buyers will get a real-time view into the status of their orders, shipments, and invoices.

Mickey CEO, Alex Rabens named Jeffrey Crouse as Vice President of Trading and he will be leading the new division. Jeffrey has spent more than 20 years in domestic and international lumber wood trading, as well as panels, EWP, Trusses, and other multifamily building materials.

Carlisle Spray Foam Insulation Launches Carlisle PRO Academy

Carlisle Spray Foam Insulation (CSFI), a leading manufacturer of spray polyurethane foam insulation products in North America, has rolled out Carlisle PRO Academy, a comprehensive training, education and certification program for spray foam professionals.

Developed in direct response to contractor feedback, Carlisle PRO Academy participants can become certified applicators by completing a series of online learning modules and an in-field evaluation. Spray foam professionals looking to earn an advanced certification have the opportunity to attend a three-day intensive training at a state-of-the-art training facility at Carlisle’s Training Center in Carlisle, Pennsylvania.

CSFI is a leading manufacturer of spray polyurethane foam systems in North America, previously marketed under Accella Polyurethane Systems. **GSCB**



Subscribers and Show Attendance

We added a new set of questions to the Mid-Year State of the Industry Survey. These questions addressed magazine subscription and show attendance.

We are in show season. Here is a chance to see who attends which shows.

We have included data on competing shows. Please consider that these numbers may be skewed because while we did partner with METALCON and the Metal Construction Association to gather data, we also included our own list, so the data may be biased toward our audience.

The top three shows (in order) for different categories of people who we polled are as follows:

Post Frame

1. Frame Building Expo
- Tied for 2&3. METALCON and Post Frame Builder Show

Metal Buildings

1. METALCON
2. Construction Rollforming Show
3. Frame Building Expo

Agricultural

1. Frame Building Expo
2. METALCON
3. Post Frame Builder Show

If you like the CSI columns or find the information useful, help us help you. Shield Wall media sends a State of the Industry Survey in fall and a mid-year State of the Industry Survey in Spring. Sign up for our emails on our website to get invited to take our survey. [GSCB](#)

BY TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	All respondents	Construction Rollforming Show	Garage, Shed & Carport Builder Show	Post Frame Builder Show (new in 2024)	METALCON
All respondents		33%	12%	30%	50%
Post Frame	42%	40%	16%	56%	56%
Metal Building	52%	51.72%	13.79%	37.93%	72.41%
Wood framed (stick built)	46%	31.82%	18.18%	40.91%	63.64%
Other Building (sheds, carports)	34%	43.75%	18.75%	37.50%	81.25%
Other Building (masonry, SIPs, tip up concrete)	17%	22.22%	11.11%	22.22%	88.89%
Sub-Contractor (site prep, electrical, HVAC, plumbing)	14%	40%	40%	20%	60%
Residential- single family	59%	34.38%	15.63%	34.38%	53.13%
Residential - multi-family	31%	55.56%	22.22%	33.33%	88.89%
Agricultural	43%	29.17%	16.67%	45.83%	50%
Commercial	64%	32.35%	14.71%	32.35%	64.71%
Industrial	29%	52.94%	11.76%	35.29%	76.47%
Retrofit/remodel	24%	27.78%	5.56%	38.89%	66.67%

BY TYPE OF CONSTRUCTION	All respondents	Shed Builder Expo	Fabtech	International Builder's Show	Regional or State Farm Shows
All respondents		7%	8%	12%	12%
Post Frame	42%	4%	4%	16%	20%
Metal Building	52%	6.90%	13.79%	13.79%	10.34%
Wood framed (stick built)	46%	9.09%	9.09%	27.27%	9.09%
Other Building (sheds, carports)	34%	6.25%	6.25%	18.75%	12.50%
Other Building (masonry, SIPs, tip up concrete)	17%	0%	22.22%	44.44%	11.11%
Sub-Contractor (site prep, electrical, HVAC, plumbing)	14%	20%	40%	0%	40%
Residential- single family	59%	9.38%	9.38%	15.63%	18.75%
Residential - multi-family	31%	5.56%	11.11%	33.33%	11.11%
Agricultural	43%	12.50%	12.50%	8.33%	25%
Commercial	64%	11.76%	11.76%	14.71%	17.65%
Industrial	29%	11.76%	17.65%	23.53%	17.65%
Retrofit/remodel	24%	0%	5.56%	27.78%	16.67%

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