

PRODUCTS

Offset Ledger Attachment

Bolts to the house, allows siding to run behind



by Mike Guertin

It's estimated there are two to three catastrophic deck failures each month; most are the result of a problem with the deck ledger connection to the house. Either the fastener system failed or a flashing problem rotted the rim board or the ledger, leaving the fasteners with nothing to hold on to.

I was intrigued when introduced to the Maine Deck Bracket (\$21), a deck ledger connection system that has been tested by the ICC Evaluation Service. Not only can you accurately determine that the ledger is adequately attached, but you can easily flash the bracket, avoiding rot for the long term.

The Deck Bracket is a thick aluminum I-beam section that bolts the deck ledger to the rim board of the house. Its 3½-inch-deep web stands the ledger off the building so the exterior cladding can be detailed between the ledger and the building for maximum weather resistance. There are fewer penetrations than when bolts alone are used, and no ledger cap flashing is necessary. The bracket's rim-joint flange must be fastened directly to the rim itself — without any plywood or OSB sheathing in between — to achieve the tested capacity of 1,000 lb. (1½-inch rim stock) or 1,600 lb. (3-inch rim stock) per bracket.

The system is simple to use on new construction, where the brackets can be through-bolted to the rim joist during the framing process. But it can also be retrofitted, by stripping back the siding and cutting the sheathing to expose the rim joist.

To weatherproof the penetration, I line the recess with Grace Vycor Deck Protector or another peel-and-stick flashing membrane. After mounting the bracket, I stick foot-long pieces of 9-inch Deck Protector to the wall sheathing on either side of the web and bond about ¾ inch of the adhesive membrane onto the sides of the web for a seal. The siding covers the membrane from view and from the degrading effects of UV light. For a final touch, sealant can be applied to seal the siding to the web, but it's the flashing tape

beneath that lets me sleep at night.

Because of the corrosiveness of the new pressure-treatment chemicals, I apply a piece of tar paper or Deck Protector as an isolation membrane over the ledger flange of the bracket before mounting the ledger.

The Maine Deck Bracket is an ideal solution for homes with stucco or EIFS siding where regular deck ledger flashing becomes complicated by the cladding thickness. It works as well with wood, fiber-cement, or vinyl siding.

Determining bracket spacing is pretty easy. Do a deck load calculation and determine the total ledger load — then divide by 1,000 lbs. I made a table for myself based on my state code (IRC 2003: 10-lb. dead load and 40-lb. live load). For an 8-foot-deep deck, I space brackets 5 feet apart; for a 10-foot deck, 4 feet apart; for a 12-foot deck, 3 feet 4 inches apart; and for a 16-foot deck, 2 feet 6 inches apart. (Check your local building code and snow load to determine spacing for your area.) — *Mike Guertin is a builder and remodeler in East Greenwich, R.I., and a siding, roofing and deck specialist at Hanley Wood's JLC Live, DeckExpo and Remodeling shows.*

■ **Maine Deck Bracket**, 207/212-0888, www.deckbracket.com

PRODUCTS

Beams for Big Spans

Nontoxic, noncorrosive preservative is another advantage



Rosboro's Treated Glulams aren't for every deck you build. Company spokesman Jim Enright was forthright enough to admit that they're "not cheap." But in some cases, they might be exactly what you need.

Treated Glulams can be had in lengths up to 48 feet, in widths of 3½ inches and 5⅞ inches, and in depths ranging from 9½ inches to 18 inches. The larger sizes can support longer clear spans than traditional site-built girders can. Longer spans mean fewer posts to interrupt views from lower floors. Fewer posts mean fewer footings, a consideration where footings are expensive (on steep slopes, for example), or downright impossible (in wetlands).

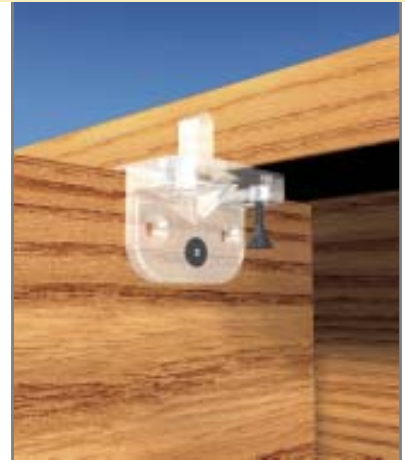
An advantage Enright claims is unique to Rosboro's beams is that the manufacturer endorses their design values. Most other treated laminated beams are standard lams that are pulled from a distributor's stock on demand and sent for treatment, says Enright, and the manufacturers won't stand behind the original design values of such third-party-treated beams.

Rosboro's glulams are treated with a copper- and mineral-spirit-based preservative, Permapost K-8. Tests by the U.S.D.A. Forest Products Lab and Mississippi State University indicate that K-8 is noncorrosive, says Enright, which means no special hardware is needed. K-8 is also claimed to be nontoxic — the only wood preservative approved for use on surfaces that will contact food. About the only caveat Enright offered is that these glulams are not intended for use where their moisture content is likely to stay above 16 percent. Because of that, Rosboro recommends Treated Glulams for decks, but not for marine use such as docks. — A.E.

■ **Rosboro**, 541/746-8411, www.rosboro.com

Invisible Deck Fasteners

Work with angled decking installations



Invisi-Fast concealed decking fasteners aren't just concealed — they're practically invisible. Your customers might wonder just what it is that's holding down their deck boards.

Made from a hard, clear plastic, Invisi-Fast fasteners screw to the joist and to the deck board from below. Use only one of the three joist-screw holes — the other two are there to provide options should there be a knot or a hollow spot in the joist. The Angled Invisi-Fast — a version for use with angled decking — has a round spacer on top, allowing any board orientation that suits your fancy.

The chief disadvantage that I can see with the Invisi-Fast system is the same as with any fastener that attaches from below: On low-to-the-ground decks, you have to stand on your head to install them. A kit to do 300 sq. ft. of 6-inch decking, with joists on 16-inch centers, costs \$200 with screws, \$170 without. — A.E.

■ **MM Products**, 866/766-9427, www.invisifast.com

Keeping Joists Dry

Preformed PVC flashing rolls out to encourage drips



One common thread in my recent conversations with deck professionals around the country is concern about the penetration of ACQ preservatives into framing lumber. Reports from both coasts suggest that pressure-treated lumber ain't what it used to be. Whether time will prove these concerns valid is up in the air, but some deck builders are taking extra measures that weren't common in years past.

One such precaution is to flash the tops of joists, providing both a roof to keep the joists dry and a separation between the decking and the framing to hasten drying. Joist Jackets are formed from recycled PVC for just that purpose.

Said to self-seal around nail and screw penetrations, Joist Jackets come in 50-foot rolls, and in 2-inch, 4-inch, and 6-inch widths. They overhang the joists slightly, encouraging water to drip from their edges, rather than run down the sides of the joists. The most common size, 2 inches, retails for about \$24 a roll. A preformed ledger flashing of the same material, Ledger Jacket, is also available, and in the works is a product to separate joist hangers from ledgers. Joist Jackets and Ledger Jackets are distributed to lumberyards through BlueLinx. — A.E.

■ **JJ Partners**, 800/700-1179, www.jjpartnersinc.com

Finish Line

Stains and sealers for hardwoods and composites



Lots of folks don't think about finishing deck materials such as ipe or composites. They are sold as low-maintenance products. But low maintenance isn't no maintenance.

Cabot formulates several products for these decks. Its semi-transparent Composite Decking Stain is a hybrid oil-and-water-based stain. It cleans up with soap and water, and is said to give composite decking more of a wood look. Cabot's Solid Color Composite Decking Stain covers the original color of the composite and matches the colors of Cabot's solid house stains. Horizontal surfaces finished with these products should be evaluated for refinishing every two to four years.

Australian Timber Oil is designed to protect hardwood decking, whose natural oils can make finishing them a challenge. Composed of a blend of linseed, alkyd, and tung resins (along with a mildewcide), Australian Timber Oil also contains UV inhibitors to minimize damage from the sun. Cabot claims that this finish also does an outstanding job on softwoods such as cedar or redwood. — A.E.

■ **Cabot**, 800/877-8246, www.cabotstain.com ♦