

# LETTERS

## Is Working Alone Wise?

I read the article “Solo-Building a High-Rise Deck” (July/August 2009) and was surprised that it was given the front page on your magazine. The process this builder used violated more OSHA regulations than I can list. Handling a 20-foot 6x6 alone is dangerous. His process makes no sense at all. A deck like that could have been built faster and cheaper and safer using a small crew. It took him 10 weeks. That deck could be built in a week with five guys.

Where I come from, that deck would not have passed code. Those front columns need lateral bracing.

**John Bartholomew**  
Raleigh, N.C.

*Editor's note: Everyone should work safely, but in general, OSHA has no jurisdiction over the self-employed. State and local regulations may, however, and if an employer-employee relationship is deemed by OSHA to exist between a contractor and a self-employed subcontractor, then the contractor may be responsible for enforcing OSHA safety standards.*

## Working Alone the Way to Go

Kudos to Mac MacDonald and his solo ventures. After a few failed attempts at finding the right person to work beside me, I too have found it easier and more rewarding to operate my decking jobs solo. It makes the days challenging when setting posts and placing beams, but it is rewarding to see what “one” can do. It is very gratifying at the end of a day when the customer arrives home and expresses astonishment at what you’ve accomplished for the day.

**Cory Wood**  
Rochester, Minn.

## Where's the Bracing?

I just finished reading “Solo-Building a High-Rise Deck.” On page 46, the author states, “Likewise, because of the height, making the framing as stable as possible takes on more importance.” I couldn’t agree more. Therefore, I find it amazing that there are no angle braces at the post-to-beam connections. The author does state that he face-screwed the decking at a 45-degree angle to “prevent” lateral sway, but I doubt his decking will accomplish that. Where I live, any deck over 4 feet in height requires angle bracing by code. Why not where he lives?

**David Orona**  
San Diego, Calif.

*Mac MacDonald, author of “Solo-Building a High-Rise Deck,” replies: The house plans (which were signed by an engineer) called for Simpson CC post caps but no additional knee bracing. I checked a chart of acceptable lateral bracing published by the building department for the city of Springfield, Ore., where I built that deck, and the bolted post caps were one option. Consequently, with the addition of the screw-attached diagonal decking, I’m more than confident this deck met our code requirement for lateral bracing.*

## Another Approach to High Work

I appreciated the article on erecting high decks solo. I have a much simpler, faster, and cheaper solution. You don’t have to go to the work of setting up scaffolding and tearing it down and loading it up to return to the rental store. A rented manlift can be driven around the site and takes about 10 minutes to set up. You can then park this thing centered on the house and not have to move it. You simply hit a joy stick and instantly and effortlessly and safely move anywhere around the job site or house. It also avoids the costly crane. These units rent for about \$175 a day or about \$750 a week.

I would guesstimate that I could have done the same thing in a little more than a week with a manlift, instead of the 3½ weeks the author took.

Working out of the bucket, he could have worked with both hands free and not worried about stepping off a scaffold accidentally. He could also have raised his own lumber into place from the bucket. For example, he could have laid his ledger board across the steel bucket rail to support it and then attached it to the house easily. The posts could have been raised from the safer position of working above the load. That way, he would not have had

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to worry about the beam slipping and falling on him.

In his story, he had to use his wife to talk to the crane operator. He really did not do it solo. With my method, you truly don't need any assistance other than the tool that will lift and hold boards for you. It takes a lot of time to tie the lumber into bundles and attach slings to it and then unhook it.

Many guys resort to ladders. According to OSHA, ladders are the number one cause of construction accidents. Scaffolding is labor intensive and dangerous to erect. It is problematic on a slope. A man-lift's outrigger feet adjust to a slope to keep you plumb and level. In fact, you can't lift the bucket until the trailer is plumb and level. You don't have these safeguards with a scaffold.

**Kenneth A. Guffey**  
Via e-mail

### Deck Lighting

Thank you for the deck e-newsletter — loved it. One question, is there a motion sensor for low-voltage stair lighting?

**Stephen R. O'Daniels**  
Via e-mail

*Scott Gibson, author of "Lighting a Deck" (July/August 2009) replies: Yes, at least one company — RAB Lighting (800/722-1000, rabweb.com) — makes a low-voltage motion detector that could be used to control 12-volt deck lighting. The product is the Stealth 12V.*

**Unlike most of the people you know, we want your two cents.**

While it's nice to hear about what we're doing right, it's more interesting to hear about what we're doing wrong. If you saw something you loved or hated, or if you've got a tip that could help out other readers, we want to know.

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