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# THE BUILDER'S JOURNAL

Inside Story

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## Rader's Insulation - Foaming with Options

Nick Rader grew up around his family's lumber company. Like so many in the building industry, he learned his craft the old fashioned way, by watching his grandfather and father build a steady all service lumber business through hard work and honest advice. Drawn to the service side of the industry, Nick started his insulation company in 2002, and has been steadily growing Rader's Insulation ever since.

"I promised myself when I got started that Rader's would be known for three

things: quality products, great service and affordable prices," says Nick. "It didn't take long to build good relationships with customers, but at first, our product line was limited." Like many insulation companies, Rader's offered only blown fiberglass. A product great for "spec" home building where cost is key. A "spec" home are homes that are built in "Speculation" of a buyer, therefore the builder will typically use the most inexpensive insulation in order to keep his selling cost down. This is compared to

Custom Home builders which usually provide their clients energy-saving options.

In order to provide clients with these energy-saving options, Nick began looking for ways to diversify his product line. "Every year, Rader's has added something new, and we've taken time to learn the mechanics behind those additions so that customers feel confident they're getting the very best products from knowledgeable experts," explains Nick.

Nick's philosophy has paid off. Since opening in 2002, Rader's business has grown every year. "Most contractors don't just build one kind of house. Sometimes they're working on high-end projects; sometimes they're focused on spec homes; and sometimes they've got a little bit of both going on at the same time. They need an insulation company that's diverse and can accommodate different products for different projects. We are that company," says Nick.

In addition to blown fiberglass, Rader's also sells radiant barriers, vinyl insulation, and cellulose. But most exciting to Nick is Rader's Insulation's role as the only insulation company in Lafayette to offer foam as an insulation service. Relatively new to the market, foam is a cost-efficient option for builders looking to significantly reduce homeowners' monthly energy expenses. "Six years ago, foam accounted for only 5% of all insulation services in the United States," says Nick. "Today, it holds 15% of the market."

Although twice as expensive up front, the long-term benefits to foam insulation are hard to ignore:

1. Foam condenses AC tonnage by as much as 35%.
2. Foam reduces lighting bills by as much as 50%.
3. Foam can bring attic temperatures down by 40 or 50 degrees.
4. Foam does not support mold growth.
5. Foam never sags or settles.
6. Foam is not hazardous.

In fact, foam's advantages for coastal homeowners are particularly real, as a special line of foam that prevents floor buckling is available for installation in homes built on piers.

"I've seen the efficiency first-hand. A friend of mine recently built a 3,400 square-foot house using

conventional insulation. His energy bill is usually around \$300 per month. Another friend built a 3,600 square-foot home using foam, and his bill is never more than \$160," says Nick. "The fact is: the initial cost is more than recovered in long-term savings. Usually there's a three-year payback in your energy bill.

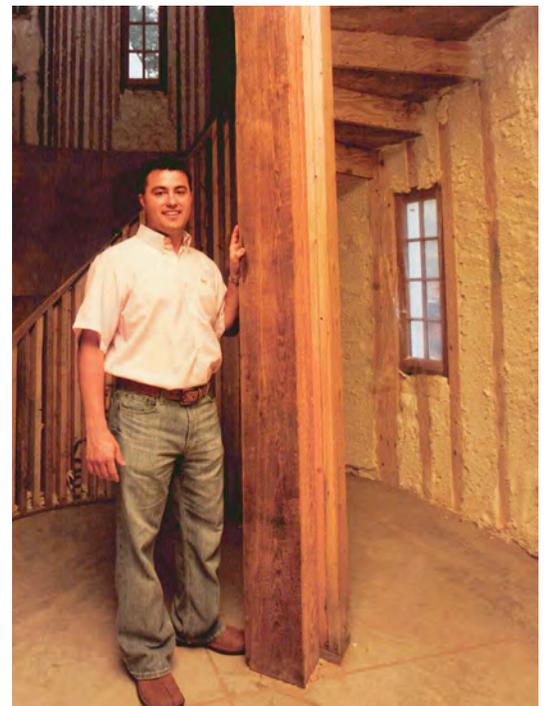
As energy prices continue to soar, those kinds of savings are particularly attractive to new homeowners. Nick explains, "Builders need to stay competitive. One of the ways they do so is by offering their homeowners top quality, energy-efficient products. Foam is therefore becoming a must have in custom building." But the benefits are not only for new construction. "The insulation in homes built before 1995," reveals Nick, "has an 85% chance of being under insulated. Plus, the industries minimum required R-values have changed dramatically in the past 10 years."

There's a common misconception about R-value and how it works. While it is typically true that the higher the R-value number, the better your insulating power. However, R-value does not test for all type of heat transfer or air-infiltration. Also, what effects the efficiency of insulation is if it is installed correctly.

To test R-value, the insulation is basically placed on a hot plate. The plate is heated, and the rate at which the temperature moves through the insulation is what determines the R-value. Now this test is also conducted in a vacuum sealed fixture. That might work for manufacturers in a laboratory, but for builders placing real customers in real homes, it's simply not good enough. They're not testing real construction situations, situations that, especially in Louisiana, always involve wind.

When wind is measured at 7 mph, a gentle breeze for Louisiana, that slow moving current can diminish the R-value in your wall by as much as 70%. Thus sealing a home from air movement has become a major focus in today's construction process. Foam is the only proven insulation that retains 100% of its R-value when installed, despite the wind outside. It does so through a unique process called air infiltration sealing, a process made possible by expert installers, like those at Rader's Insulation, and area builders seem to agree with him.

As more and more customers request Rader's foam products. Nick finds satisfaction in providing a product that lives up to its promises. "Customer satisfaction matters to me," smiles Nick, "and with foam, that's just what we get." For more information, call Nick Rader at 337-319-0470 or 337-247-3406. TBJ



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