



NAHB Building Business Briefs

A Service of the Business Management & Information Technology Committee

Say “Frieze”: Using Digital Pictures To Document Jobsites

Now that they’ve come down in price and size, digital cameras are becoming as common as cell phones on jobsites. Easy to drop into e-mails and more convenient than prints or slides, digital pictures are just the thing for sending progress updates to customers. And they’re great for punching up your Web site with your best projects.

Digital pics are good for much more than show and tell, though. Snap them in various locations on your sites and they could save you time, money, frustration—and potential lawsuits.

Chris Thompson, a custom home builder and president of On the Level, Inc., in Carver, Minn., offers these tips on documenting jobsites with digital photos:

- **Keep it clean.** First things first—make sure you do a thorough clean-up job before shooting any photos on your jobsites. You don’t want stuff that makes you look like a slob (food wrappers, scrap lumber, sawdust, or other debris) showing up in any of the shots.
- **Foundation.** Take pics after the foundation is waterproofed and insulated; the day before backfilling is best. Pictures can help address building inspection questions. And they’re a good resource if the foundation develops serious problems like leaks or cracks.
- **Framing.** Take pics after all mechanicals are complete; the day before the insulators show up is a good time to shoot. Thompson takes general pictures of all walls and ceilings, and gets close enough so that headers, trimmers, and other structural details show up in the frames. “Drywallers almost always bury an outlet or light on every job,” says the builder. “Now you can help them find it and show them that they really did miss it.”

If a customer wants to make a change after the drywall goes up, digital photos can help you accurately calculate the cost. The photos can back you up, too, if you decide the change is impossible to make.

If the client wants to do any remodeling after the sale, the pictures are very useful for pinpointing studs, mechanicals, etc.

- **Radiant floor heating.** Whether you’re installing a hydronic or electric system, take photos after the tubes or cables have been laid but before they’re sealed in concrete or

some other substrate. Photos can be used as proof that the heating elements were spaced correctly.

A side benefit: “They can, to some extent, be used to show the heating elements’ proximity to walls or other benchmarks to help prevent people from driving fasteners into them,” Thompson adds.

- **General.** Take pictures of window weatherproofing and all flashing at deck ledgers, roofs, and other areas to show what you’ve done to prevent water intrusion.

Chris Thompson is a member of NAHB's Business Management & Information Technology Committee.

*For more information about using the Internet to benefit your business, check out *The Web @ Work: Internet Basics for Home Builders*. Call 800-223-2665 or log onto www.builderbooks.com to order. Price: \$28.80 for members; \$36 for non-members.*

This Building Business Brief can be sent to you via e-mail. For more information, contact Jill Tunick at 1-800-368-5242, ext. 8461, or by e-mail: jtunick@nahb.com. This material may be reprinted in NAHB newsletters and member education materials.