

Rack and Ruin

By George Porter

How do homes get racked? Recently during a setup seminar we encountered a home that was racked toward the hitch. When the floors were lined up in this doublewide the roof was 4 inches out of line end to end. When we referred to the manual it said, "Lift outside corner opposite misalignment to rack home into position". This must have been written sometime in the 70's because if you think you can rack a tape and textured house this much without causing something like a snow storm in the interior of the house then you must not be familiar with the flexing ability of drywall. Now factor in the hardboard siding and the fact that the box has to straighten up 4 inches and you are making yourself lots of work. Thank goodness it is mostly the walls and doorways and not too much the popcorn ceiling.

How about a few suggestions?

#1 Document the problem.

Take pictures, get witnesses, record measurements with a tape measure and level.

#2 Ask factory what they want you to do.

If you are sure this thing is not square then in the case of drywall and hardboard it must have been built that way. Transit can cause a little shift, but not 4 inches in this type home and not have cracks all over it when it arrived at the lot.

#3 Do what they say and bill them.

Here's the part that some factories like and some don't. Any quality control program that is not interested in this type of feedback needs a visit from the home office. If this is a result of a production problem they might make a hundred of them before they know they've got a problem.

On the other hand suppose you do what many installers do, just crunch it into shape and spend a few hours of your time and a bucket of spackling fixing it. Please don't do this, if not for your own sake then at least as a favor to the rest of us. If you take care of factory problems and don't let them know then it's not their problem, you have made it your own and you have no control over fixing the original problem. You will always have the problem and frankly, if you don't do anything about it, you probably earned it.

Yes it may be less trouble to not take pictures, not call the factory etc. but you do want this industry to improve don't you? Wouldn't it be nice to not have these problems? Factories would like very much not to have these troubles, especially if all they have to do is adopt some slight procedure in the line and it all goes away.

If you don't inform anyone about this stuff guess who gets the blame? The setup guy that's who! They never had any problems that they knew of till you showed up so it must be your doing. This might lead to your rack and ruin down the road when they think you are the cause of all the cracks in the drywall.