



Sales Strategies: The Case for TallWall OSB



If the current housing economy has exposed anything, it is that home builders need creative and cost-effective solutions to survive and succeed. And they are turning to their local pro-focused lumber and building materials dealer for answers.

That's because they know that smart suppliers are constantly on the lookout for products that enable them to reduce costs for materials, labor, and service callbacks.

Finding such cost efficiencies is especially effective on big-ticket orders such as lumber and structural panels, where even a little per-unit cost difference can add up to big savings on a purchase order, and even more so if that solution saves labor costs and delivers superior long-term, hassle-free performance.

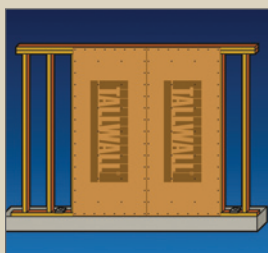
But where in the world of commodity LBM categories can a dealer affect such cost efficiencies? Sticks are sticks and panels are panels, right? Not exactly.



What Is TallWall OSB?

TallWall from Norbord are 4x9 and 4x10 structural oriented strand board (OSB) sheathing panels designed to reduce air infiltration and increase wall strength without requiring extra tools or training. Like conventional exterior wall sheathing, code-approved TallWall sheathing panels install with standard fasteners; the difference is in how they perform.

Fewer Air Leaks: Larger sheathing panels result in fewer joints in the wall, which reduces air infiltration into the framing cavity and conditioned space.



All wall sheathing applications require a 1/8-inch gap at every joint. Using TallWall sheathing panels results in fewer horizontal joints because their 4-foot edges align with the home's framing and their taller vertical seams are designed to bridge wall studs to effectively block air from getting through by up to 63% compared to a wall sheathed with conventional 4x8 OSB panels—a fact confirmed by the NAHB Research Center.

Stronger Walls: Tests conducted at Virginia Tech University showed that 4x10 TallWall sheathing installed vertically and designed

to overlap (or bridge) floor joist cavities between floors on a 9-foot-high wall increased the overall strength of the wall by 38% compared to the same wall sheathed with 4x8 OSB panels.

Norbord developed TallWall sheathing to deliver these benefits without changing the way builders and framers handle, cut, and fasten structural wall sheathing while affording them the additional benefits of faster and simpler installation, lower labor costs, and fewer service callbacks for problems such as nail pops and drywall cracks.

Environmental Benefits of TallWall OSB

- Available with FSC® or SFI® Chain of Custody Certification to qualify for green building certification credits, including LEED for Homes and NAHB Green (based on the National Green Building Standards)
- Certified Green Approved by the NAHB Research Center
- Reduce air leakage by up to 63% when combined with housewrap and joint tape (and up to 43% without those components) to improve a home's energy efficiency
- Taller and fewer panels per project results in less materials waste on the job site



The mark of responsible forestry




A TALL ORDER

What if a builder or framing contractor could install 20% fewer oriented strand board (OSB) panels on a typical two-story gable wall while also delivering superior thermal performance and strength without having to seal the vertical joints between sheathing panels?

Or, what if they could sheathe to a 9-foot high plate height without having to use two or three structural panels, which usually means having to scrap most of the second sheet, a waste of time, materials, and money.

Those are some of the key value propositions for Norbord's TallWall OSB structural sheathing (What is TallWall OSB," previous page). TallWall sheathing is available in 9 or 10-foot lengths. That basic modification from conventional 4x8 sheathing enables more precise estimating and purchasing, serves contemporary home design requirements, and cuts installation time and job site materials waste.

In addition, TallWall sheathing also address increasing consumer and industry demand for "green" products and improved energy efficiency by reducing air leakage through the wall.



Studies and focus groups with builders, both large and small, have shown one common theme over the years. Builders want to have a good solid working relationship with both the Pro Dealer and the sales representative. There are opportunities for the professional salesperson to present products and ideas that can save builders time, material, and money. Sometimes that involves presenting a product directly to the builder, sometimes it means putting the idea in front of the design professional so it can be incorporated into the drawings. Other times it can be advantageous to present the product to the sub-trades first to get their buy-in or at a local HBA meeting for a broader audience. No matter which route is taken relationships are strengthened.

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How? Not only do the longer TallWall OSB sheathing panels result in fewer horizontal joints on a fully sheathed wall, the vertical and horizontal seams are located directly over the structural framing. That design effectively mitigates air leakage through the requisite 1/8-inch gaps at all panel edges by up to 63% compared to a comparable wall built with 4x8 OSB panels, according to tests conducted by the NAHB Research Center.

Less air leakage results in lower heating and cooling demand and monthly utility costs for the homeowner and a differentiating point for builders in a competitive sales environment.

Because OSB sheathing optimizes wood fiber and timber resources far better than plywood they are inherently green. TallWall OSB sheathing goes a step further. The product also is available with FSC® or SFI® Chain of Custody Certification to further enhance its environmental benefits. And, with TallWall sheathing, fewer scrap pieces end up in the local landfill.

STOCKING SALES

Every good salesperson knows that you can't sell what you don't have. Nor can a dealer expect his outside sales force to effectively push a product that's only available as a special order.

Good dealers are geared to react to special orders, not encourage them; there's too much else in the yard to turn. And no LBM dealer wants to be caught without enough inventory to satisfy demand and potential profitability.

The fact is, carrying an adequate inventory of TallWall sheathing affords the dealer and his pro customers some compelling advantages.



Norbord has other great products that can help both builders and Pro Dealers. Pinnacle Premium sub-flooring has a 100-day, no-sand guarantee and a 50-year warranty. Solarbord radiant barrier structural sheathing is an Energy Star Partner and offers builders something to differentiate themselves and home buyers energy savings for as long as they own the home.

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TallWall Storage and Handling Tips

- TallWall OSB panels should be stored flat, indoors, or under cover and protected from the elements
- When stacked, align the supports banded to the unit of panels
- Provide full-width blocking placed six inches from each end and at 24-inch intervals over the length of the unit if the panels are too large to have supports bands; align the blocking for stacked units
- If stored outdoors, keep the panels off the ground and on a flat base. Cover loosely to allow air circulation at the sides
- OSB should not be exposed to the weather or moisture on a continuous basis. However, exposure 1 bond rating indicates that unprotected exposure during normal construction periods will not adversely affect the structural properties
- Panels should be handled and stored to avoid damage and should be used on a first-in, first-out basis

Reason 1: Availability. Try as they might to establish ordering and delivery schedules and calculate lead times, builders and dealers can't always account for delays in the upstream supply channel, from bad weather to occasional shipping miscues, to meet those deadlines.

With TallWall structural sheathing in stock, dealers can meet just-in-time, ad-hoc, and short-order delivery demands from their pro customers without hesitation, fostering a reputation for responsiveness and reliability that can go a long way to sustained sales and customer loyalty.

Reason 2: Cost Efficiency. As much as TallWall sheathing can save a builder time and money on the job site and reduce service callbacks, keeping these panels in stock can also reduce a dealer's costs and help preserve profitability.

With TallWall sheathing in inventory, a dealer isn't paying for short-load or special-order transportation costs or rush charges to meet a builder's schedule. Sure, a dealer could pass those costs along to the customer, but that undermines the builder's loyalty to the business and threatens future sales. And if a dealer absorbs those costs and/or is left with only a few panels from a special order, it eats into his profit margin.

Reason 3: Space Efficiency. By definition, TallWall sheathing panels require less space in the yard than 4x8 sheets simply because fewer

of them are required for each job. TallWall sheathing dealers also don't have to stock as many 4x8 panels for wall sheathing jobs. Sure, the footprint might be a little larger (with one or two extra feet of length per panel), but units and stacks will be shorter and easier to handle (see sidebar, TallWall OSB Storage and Handling Tips," above).

There's also no special training or equipment required to stack or move TallWall sheathing around the yard, onto a flatbed, or at the job site. You'll just be handling fewer of them.

Reason 4: Sales Motivation. For good reason, TallWall sheathing carries a slightly higher profit margin than conventional 4x8 OSB sheathing. In addition, with an adequate inventory and measureable turn goals for that stock, a dealer's sales force is far more likely to aggressively sell TallWall sheathing panels than if they were a special order item.

Reason 5: Word of Mouth. Once a handful of pro customers get a few jobs under their belts and see the benefits of TallWall sheathing, word is likely to spread across residential job sites in the area.

As much as builders, especially, would like to corner the market on the myriad savings afforded by TallWall sheathing to maintain a competitive edge against their peers, framers who work with a number of quality builders in

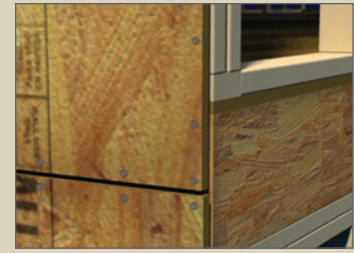
town will want to spec the product on every job. And tap the same dealer with the product in stock to supply it.

SELLING TO THE PRO

When it comes to sheathing the exterior of a framed wall, builders and framers don't want to think too much about it; to make money, they need to cut their crews loose and let them install panels as fast as possible before moving on to the next wall or the next job.

Without requiring anything different in terms of handling, cutting, or fastening the panels to the wall, TallWall OSB structural sheathing satisfies that need for speed while creating a stronger, more energy-efficient and hassle-free assembly in the process. All the crew has to do is follow the framing plan and sheathing layout, as they would on any job (see sidebar, TallWall OSB Installation Tips," next page).

In fact, they'll likely find the job goes faster, not only because each wall requires fewer 4x9 or 4x10 TallWall panels compared to conventional 4x8 sheathing, but also because they require no blocking or filler strips, fewer cuts, fewer trips up and down the ladder or scaffold, and fewer change-outs of the nail gun's magazine (TallWall sheathing panels require 25% fewer fasteners to install than a wall sheathed with 4x8 panels). Time is money on a job site, and builders and framers respond to solutions that save time.



TallWall Installation Tips

TallWall OSB panels are engineered specifically to be used for wall applications and are not to be used for roof or floor sheathing. TallWall OSB and related Norbord structural sheathing is to be installed according to the APA's (The Engineered Wood Association) Construction Guide E30 and the appropriate building code. These key installation tips should also be followed:

- All panels should be spaced 1/8-inch apart along all edges
- All panels should be continuous over two or more spans
- Overlap the joist area and top plates to significantly increase wall capacity, stiffness, and displacement. Use 4x9 TallWall panels for 8-foot high walls and 4x10 panels for 9-foot walls
- Provide 3/4-inch expansion joints for every continuous section of panels exceeding 80 feet in length
- Consult your local building codes for fastener placement and pattern requirements
- Prior to application, allow the stack of panels to acclimate to the job site's conditions for at least 24 hours

Second only to speed on a pro customer's wish list is reliability. Products that are readily available, third-party approved, and perform over the long term make it on to the spec sheet

By covering more surface area and bridging studs along their vertical joints, APA quality certified and building code-approved TallWall sheathing creates a stronger, stiffer wall assembly that mitigates drywall cracks, nail pops, and other performance problems that undermine a builder's profitability and reputation for quality construction.

Variations of the panels called Windstorm are also offered to create a more efficient and effective code-compliant continuous load path for high-wind and hurricane areas without additional stud-to-plate or floor-to-floor connecting hardware or horizontal joint blocking beyond what's required by the local code authority.

Increasingly, builders also must consider energy efficiency and overall environmental quality with their purchasing decisions. A growing number see the value in gaining third-party certification from one or several green building programs, whether it be local guidelines or national rating systems such as the National Green Building Standard or Energy Star.

To help meet more robust energy performance standards, TallWall sheathing has been proven—both in the field and in the lab—to reduce air infiltration through the wall, a critical element in lowering a home's heating and cooling energy demand and costs.

TallWall sheathing also can reduce job-site waste (larger panels equal fewer cuts and scrap pieces) and is available with FSC® or SFI® Chain of

Custody Certification. Both of those benefits may earn credits toward green building certification.

Finally, builders are creating homes that are customized to suit their buyers or are marketable to a more discriminating and value-conscious audience. One by-product of that is the advent of more spacious and open floor plans and higher ceilings that deliver the perception of greater style and comfort across nearly all price points and house sizes.

To a framer, though, 9-foot and higher plate heights require more work and time to build, especially with conventional 4x8 sheathing panels that don't cover plate-to-plate. TallWall sheathing installs as single panels from the top to the bottom of today's taller walls, saving a contractor's time while satisfying a buyer's wish list of features.

A PROFITABLE PROSPECT

For all of these reasons and more, TallWall sheathing offers a profitable opportunity for pro-focused LBM dealers to keep this product in inventory.

In addition to commanding a higher price per foot and up to a 20% markup per panel compared to conventional 4x8 sheathing, TallWall sheathing panels build loyalty among pro customers who will quickly come to appreciate their multiple benefits, namely time savings and performance.

TallWall sheathing also will enhance a dealer's reputation for providing solutions to its builder and contractor customers, specifically addressing consumer and regulatory demand for better

energy and environmental performance as well as today's taller ceilings and open floor plans.

And stocking TallWall sheathing does not require any changes to a dealer's operation, yard space, or sales tactics. It is simply a better mousetrap for a necessary and critical stage of housing and light commercial construction.

For both the dealer and the pro customer, TallWall structural sheathing can be a cornerstone of market distinction and a competitive advantage in any sales climate.



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THE VALUE PROPOSITION

Norbord Inc. is an international forest products company and the second largest OSB producer in the world with operations in North America and Europe. Norbord has a long history of first-to-market products and innovations that are engineered, manufactured, and introduced to provide real value for the builder and the home buyer.

TallWall OSB wall sheathing is just one example of a first-to-market product from Norbord. TallWall structural OSB sheathing addresses challenges builders face. Challenges such as how to reduce waste generated during construction and the associated disposal costs, and how to shorten build times while meeting new energy-code requirements for air leakage. Introduced more than 15 years ago Tallwall provides builders with a structural wall sheathing that can help them build a stronger structure with less waste and less labor. Recent testing at the NAHB Research Center clearly demonstrated that using TallWall sheathing can substantially reduce wall air leakage. Overlapping the joist area on a 9-foot wall with 4x10 TallWall panels increases wall capacity by 35%, stiffness by 24%, and displacement by

38% compared to using 4x8s. That stiffer wall means fewer nail pops and a flatter wall for siding application. Plus, TallWall has no special installation or training requirements.

Pro Dealers also face their own set of challenges, whether it's having enough inventory or the right inventory mix to meet the needs of a changing industry. At the same time the stocking Pro Dealer has the opportunity to present and offer great solutions to challenges their builders face today.

Builders look to, and will continue to look to, Pro Dealers and their professional sales staff for help and solutions to the challenges they face. Builders want to have, or to build, strong relationships with their sales reps and dealers; and providing those value solutions goes a long way. TallWall is a great opportunity for Pro Dealers and their staff to carry and offer a product that can impact multiple issues builders face.

THE TALLWALL DIFFERENCE

Using its advanced press technology and press sizes, Norbord is able to create TallWall wall sheathing that is longer than traditional 4x8 panels. These longer TallWall

panels are precision end-trimmed, resulting in one continuous structural wall sheathing that spans from the top plates to the bottom plate or joist area, which eliminates the need for the additional cutting, blocking, and filler strips.

Tallwall is engineered to translate into savings on materials, labor, and time for today's builders.

TallWall is just one member of the Norbord family of great products. Windstorm structural wall sheathing for high wind markets can provide builders with savings of up to a \$1,000 or more per house by eliminating or reducing a significant amount of metal hardware, blocking, and labor. Stabledge and Pinnacle premium sub-flooring offer no-sand warranties while our Solarbord Radiant Barrier sheathing can help the builder offer energy-saving homes that today's buyers are looking for. For more information or a downloadable warranty, visit TallWallosb.com at your convenience. Information on other great Norbord products is available at Norbord.com.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Rich Binsacca

Rich Binsacca is an award-winning journalist and author. He has written for a variety of construction, housing, and lifestyle magazines since 1987, and is the author of 15 books in the realm of residential design and construction, home restoration, building products, and related topics. A former on-staff senior editor at *BUILDER* magazine, he is currently a senior contributing editor for that publication and for *ProSales* and *EcoHome* magazines, and also contributes articles and content to several other construction-related publications and Web sites. He is a 1987 graduate of the University of Missouri-Columbia School of Journalism and his work has been recognized by the American Society of Business Press Editors, the National Association of Real Estate Editors, and the American Business Publishers, among others. He currently resides in Boise, Idaho.

About Norbord

Based in Toronto, Norbord Inc. is an international producer of wood-based panels with assets of \$1 billion and U.S. annual sales of \$1 billion. Norbord has 14 operations in the United States, Europe, and Canada. Norbord is a publicly traded company listed on the Toronto Stock Exchange under the symbol NBD. For more information, visit www.norbord.com.



Norbord Inc.
1 Toronto Street, Suite 600
Toronto, Ontario
M5C 2W4
Canada
(416) 365-0705
www.norbord.com