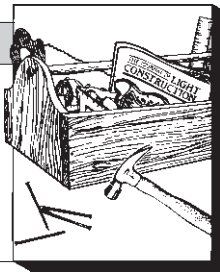


# Cordless Nailers Come of Age

by Clayton DeKorne



The Impulse cordless nailer has been on the market for a few years. Early models had some problems with dirt entry. It was not uncommon for first-generation Impulse guns to jam, misfire, or stop working altogether. Paslode (Illinois Tool Works, 1 Marriott Drive, Lincolnshire, IL 60015; 800/323-1303) has improved this nailer with new seals, a better filter, and a redesigned cap assembly to make cleaning the filter easier.

According to distributors, Paslode has also taken the responsibility to upgrade the early models with a conversion kit.

This on-the-job development effort seems to have produced a very competent and convenient nailer that can compete with any pneumatic nailer, including Paslode's own.

The Impulse 300 is a self-contained

The Impulse is slightly slower to operate than a pneumatic nailer, but it is also a bit safer. The operator must follow a three-step sequence of holding down the fan switch by grasping the handle, depressing the nose against the work surface, and pulling the trigger. You can hold the fan switch down continuously and deliver nails as fast as you can pull the trigger. You can't hold the trigger down and "bounce," however, like you can with a pneumatic gun. This may slow down some decking jobs, but you can't bounce the tool off your foot (or your buddy's head), either.

The exhaust is hazardous and care should be taken to ventilate the workspace as well as possible. The fumes made me woozy after using it in a basement with only a bulkhead door



*The Impulse nailer is powered by a small fuel cell and battery that frees the user from restrictive hoses and compressor. This can make roof framing and sheathing both faster and safer.*

nailer that will drive common nails 2 to 3 inches long (the Impulse 325 will drive a 3 1/4-inch nail). It requires a battery and a fuel cell, but uses no compressor or hoses. It is driven by a simple internal combustion "engine" that burns MAP gas (methyl anadine propadine). A spark produced by a 6 volt ni-cad battery ignites a measured amount of fuel and the explosion forces a piston straight down to drive the nail. The battery also runs a small fan that aids combustion, cools the engine, and blows out the exhaust. Each fuel canister contains enough fuel to drive about 1,200 fasteners. The battery will drive about 4,000 nails on a single charge.

The Impulse looks and sounds like Darth Vader of Star Wars. When the handle is grasped, the fan starts and produces a low hum. The first shot made me jump. It's as loud as a .22 rifle shot, making earmuffs or plugs desirable. The all-plastic, black body adds to its high-tech look. It is made of a super-tough nylon plastic, which makes the tool much lighter than air tools cast in aluminum or magnesium. The tool weighs just 8 1/2 pounds loaded with a fuel cell, battery, and a strip of 12d nails (compared to 14 pounds for the Paslode 5350 framer). I was skeptical at first about the durability of a plastic body. However, a quick look at several well-used Impulse guns at a local tool rental convinced me that they can take some abuse.

open. A noxious odor has supposedly been added to the fuel to ensure that the operator will ventilate. The smell seemed mild to me—similar to a kid's cap gun.

The Impulse will not fire if it is out of nails or fuel, or if the battery is low. A quick glance at a reload indicator on the magazine and a battery indicator light on the handle will show if it needs nails or a battery charge.

To overcome problems with dirt, Paslode instituted a new cleaning procedure that needs to be done on a regular basis. The procedure requires a complete breakdown of the tool, right down to the cylinder. Following step-by-step instructions illustrated by clear photographs, I was able to carry out the procedure in about 45 minutes. If I was set up and familiar with the routine, I might be able to do it in 20 minutes. It was simple enough that I might even do it regularly.

The Impulse nailer is expensive to own and operate. The tool lists for \$899. Fuel cells cost about \$4.80 each. A buyer should keep in mind, however, that a single gun replaces a pneumatic gun, a compressor, and hoses. If you run a one-gun show, it is cheap. But no matter how many you might need, you are paying for convenience, namely the convenience of not having to lug around a compressor or untangle a lot of hose. ■