

## Weigh In!

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EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW



**1.** The vacuum's flat top can hold a Bosch modular L-Boxx tool case for added convenience.



## Bosch VAC140A Wet/Dry Vacuum

BY PAUL JOHNSON

**In late 2013 I tested eight** shop/jobsite vacuums, including the Bosch 13-gallon model 3931A-PBH. While I liked its overall performance, I had some concerns and complaints. Bosch has since introduced an updated 14-gallon version, the model VAC140A. After pushing this new model hard for a couple of months, I've concluded that it's pretty awesome.

### FEATURES

At 38 pounds, the VAC140A is heavier than average, but it's lighter, taller, and narrower than its predecessor, and the top handle makes it easy to carry. The two small locking casters and two large wheels roll extremely smoothly. The casters can catch on larger debris, but a sturdy push handle allows you to tip them up while rolling. The vacuum also has a convenient cord wrap and hose wrap, as well as holders for vacuum tubes and nozzles.

One of my concerns with the previous model was the flimsy plastic latches that secure the control unit to the tank below. The VAC140A has two beefy latches that feel almost indestructible. It can be used with or without Bosch's disposable bags, which come in four types for capturing various dry and wet materials. I tried the plastic bags and the paper ones and both worked well, filling up completely before causing any noticeable change in suction. They were also easy to remove for disposal.

The vacuum accepts three types of filters, including an optional HEPA filter that brings it into compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency's Renovation, Repair, and Painting (RRP) rule for lead paint—necessary for older-home remodeling jobs. To access the filter compartment, you simply pull a latch and raise a hinged lid until it clicks into place. An automatic filter-cleaning mechanism reverses air flow in short

bursts every 15 seconds to help keep the filter clean without interrupting the suction. I noticed very little suction loss after using the standard paper filter for long periods, even when vacuuming concrete and dry-wall dust. Bosch warns that this cleaning feature must be turned off when using paper bags, fleece bags, or HEPA filters because it can damage them.

When a power tool drawing up to 7.5 amps is plugged directly into the vacuum, using the tool automatically triggers the vacuum. An adjustable “Power Broker” lets you dial down the vacuum’s amperage draw if necessary to prevent circuit overload or to reduce the suction for special applications.

### SUCTION TESTS

I used the vacuum in the shop and on the jobsite with excellent results, cleaning up bulk debris and hooking it to miter saws, table saws, a router table, an angle grinder, and other tools. I didn’t try wet vacuuming, but I did notice the helpful built-in drainage hose.

I also put the vacuum through several torture tests—vacuuming bags of concrete mix, powdered drywall compound, and various nails and other media with and without a dust bag installed. The Bosch performed exceptionally well, sucking up a 60-pound bag of concrete mix in an average time of 122 seconds, and a 25-pound bag of

drywall compound in 80 seconds (that beat my reigning “Best Overall” Makita VC4710). Unlike the other vacuums I tested, the Bosch also sucked up all the different nails I had strewn about, including 12d sinkers. The 16-foot hose never clogged during regular use or testing, and it didn’t deliver shocks from static electricity like the old hose did.

### THE BOTTOM LINE

Overall, I’m very impressed with the VAC140A. Bosch has addressed all the concerns I had with the previous model and has crafted a well-designed unit. If this vacuum had been on the market in late 2013, it would have been my top choice.

#### VAC140A Specs

- Capacity:** 14.5 gallons
- Weight:** 38 pounds
- Air flow:** 150 cubic feet per minute
- Noise level:** 70 decibels
- EPA compliant:** yes
- Price:** \$670
- Included in kit:** 16-foot hose, paper filter, plastic vacuum bag
- Warranty:** 1 year, 30-day money-back guarantee

*Paul Johnson is a remodeling contractor in Portland, Ore.*



### RIDGID LM-400 LASER DISTANCE METER

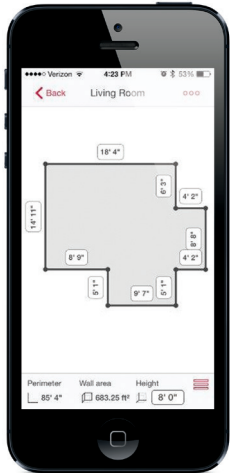
I just finished exploring Ridgid’s new Bluetooth model LM-400 laser distance meter, which costs \$200 and uses free iOS and Android apps to expand its versatility. It has a full quiver of standalone features, which means it can do everything from calculating square or cubic feet to reading slopes. It’s dust-proof and splash-proof, can mount to a tripod, has a backlit display, an erasable memory, and a timer.

My iPod Touch easily downloaded the Ridgid Sketch app and quickly paired with the LM-400 via Bluetooth. It took me just a few minutes to view a concise illustrated guide within the app. I think Ridgid is on the right track with this app. For instance, it allows you to draw a right-angle room plan with a finger, and then use the LM-400 to shoot the wall lengths and ceiling height. The app automatically imports each wall length into your drawing and calculates the room’s perimeter, wall areas, floor area, and volume. You can also snap a photo with your mobile device, draw dimension

Photos: 2 & 3, Nina Johnson



**2.** Simply lift a hinged lid to access the filter. **3.** The vacuum sucked up 25-pound bags of drywall compound in an average of 80 seconds per bag.



lines on it, use the LM-400 to fill in the dimensions, and add notes. When you're ready, you can email the annotated drawings or photos. During my sessions, however, the app would sometimes mysteriously delete a sketch or a photo or the dimensions from a photo. It also strips the fractions from all measurements displayed on your mobile device, but shows them in your emailed drawings and photos. Even then, the fractions in these emails aren't always identical to the fractions that were originally displayed on the LM-400.

The meter also has a few drawbacks. It only displays fractions down to  $\frac{1}{16}$  inch, doesn't have a tailpiece for measuring diagonals from inside corners, is comparatively bulky, and emits loud beeps that you can't turn off in a quiet zone. The unit I tried defaulted to meters when I turned it on, constantly forcing me to reset it to feet and inches (though Ridgid says it has now fixed that problem). Maybe I'll love the next version of this meter and app, but right now they fall a bit short. —Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC.

## DeWalt Pro Organizers

BY DAVID FRANE

I bought these boxes because they looked like a better way to store loose fasteners—and they are. Stored nails and drywall screws take up less space than the jars and cans on the shelves in my shop, and I have better access because the clear lids let me see what's inside.

The Deep Pro Organizer comes with 10 removable cups: eight small ones about 3 inches by 4 inches by  $3\frac{1}{2}$  inches deep; and two large ones twice that size (1). You can swap cups between boxes, and ridges on the underside of the lid prevent cups from sliding around when neighboring ones are missing. The boxes can be carried alone or ganged together with clips that fold up from the sides (2).

As plastic boxes go, the Deep Pro is very sturdy. The latches and hinge pin are steel and the lid is polycarbonate; everything else is thermoplastic.

Unlike most inexpensive organizers, these boxes do a good job of keeping parts from sliding into neighboring cups when you stand them on edge.

The Mid-Size Pro Organizer holds six of the same small removable cups, has two smaller cups molded into the handle, and can

be connected to other boxes of its kind (3). Unlike the Deep Pro, this box has polycarbonate latches molded into the lid. They make the lid easier to open and close, but I can't speak for how long they will last. The other notable difference is the presence of a gasket near the edge of the lid, which gives this box an IP53 rating—just shy of being dust-proof, and moderately water resistant (resistant to water sprayed  $60^\circ$  off vertical).

Both of these Pro Organizers are sturdy and convenient. They can't be ganged with toolboxes like L-Boxes and Systainers can, but they are equally handy and sell for a fraction of the price of those systems.

### DeWalt Pro Organizer Specs

#### Deep Pro (DWST14825)

Length: 17.5 inches  
Width: 14 inches  
Height: 4.5 inches  
Street price: \$24

#### Mid-Size Pro (DWST14740)

Length: 10 inches  
Width: 14 inches  
Height: 4.5 inches  
Street price: \$15

David Frane is editor of TOOLS OF THE TRADE, from which this review has been adapted.

