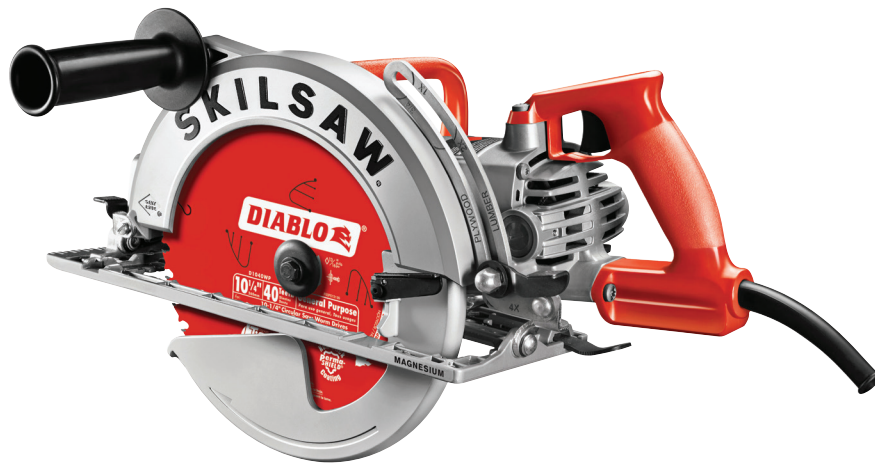


Weigh In!

Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at JLCtools@hanleywood.com



EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW



Power Up: 10 1/4-Inch Wormdrive

BY SIM AYERS

One way to cut 4-by lumber is to make two passes from opposite sides of the stock with a 7 1/4-inch circular saw. The extra labor is okay in a pinch, but it's unacceptable for production framing. In California, besides the usual 4-by posts, beams, and headers, we often have to install lots of 4x4 hold-down posts to meet the seismic requirements of the California building code.

Many framing contractors avoid making dual cuts by using a 10 1/4-inch Big Foot Tools wormdrive saw, which has a maximum cutting capacity of about 3 7/8 inches. It's actually a 7 1/4-inch Skilsaw wormdrive fitted with oversize upper and lower blade guards and a compatible baseplate. The saw is also used for cutting doubled 2-bys, cutting thicker beams with two opposing cuts, and gang-cutting thick stacks of plywood.

We bought our first Big Foot in 2002 and have used one almost daily ever since. But these are demanding cuts, and we've had to transfer our Big Foot guards and baseplates to new 7 1/4-inch Skilsaws several times after burning out the motors. When *JLC* asked if

we'd like to try the new 10 1/4-inch Skilsaw Sawsquatch wormdrive (skilsaw.com), we jumped on it. After using it for two months, we think it's definitely an upgrade.

POWER BOOST

If you look past the imposing blade guards and baseplate and the reversible side handle, the new Sawsquatch resembles the other premium Skilsaw wormdrives. It has the same levers, a legible bevel scale that's divided into degrees, an accurately calibrated depth bracket for quickly setting the desired cutting depth, a folding rafter hook, and a blade wrench that stows on the baseplate. The versatile wrench can also pry the diamond knockout from a new blade, loosen an overtightened bevel or depth lever, and remove or install the oil plug and brush caps. The saw has the same brawny wormdrive gearing as the smaller models and, like all Skilsaw wormdrives manufactured over the past several decades, is powered by a "Dual-Field" motor that runs cooler than competing ones for

improved durability. But the Sawsquatch motor has more steel laminations in the field and armature than the other Skilsaw Dual-Field motors, which adds length and weight but generates more torque.

The gear housing, blade guards, and baseplate are made of magnesium. The motor housing is made of aluminum.

ON THE JOB

Out of the box, the Sawsquatch we tested made a perfectly square crosscut through a 4-by at the 0-degree bevel setting, but you can quickly fine-tune this setting if necessary by turning a screw on the baseplate. The saw bevels to 51 degrees and has a positive stop at 45. On our saw, however, this stop set the bevel to 44.1 degrees, forcing us to pull on the stop spring to adjust to 45 degrees. We rarely make bevel cuts with our 10 1/4-inch saws, though, so this is a minor nuisance. Also, the rafter hook was slightly bent, preventing us from hanging the saw from a 2-by. I have no idea if it arrived that way or if we accidentally whacked it hard in our truck box right after we received the saw, but I think it would take a pretty big blow to bend it. The hook looks just like the ones on our other Skilsaws and we've never had a problem, so that was probably just a fluke.

To gauge whether the Sawsquatch was indeed more powerful than the Big Foot, we used both saws interchangeably while framing a 3,100-square-foot residential addition. The Big Foot was powered by a Skilsaw SHD77 and equipped with the same general-purpose 40-tooth Diablo thin-kerf blade that's included with the Sawsquatch. In all, we crosscut about 90 4x4 posts along with 65 4-by girders and headers. We also ripped some 3-by and 4-by for various reasons, which we routinely do. All of this lumber was Douglas fir. Unlike the Big Foot, which occasionally bogged down when ripping green lumber, the Sawsquatch powered right through every cut.

The 18 1/2-pound Sawsquatch also seems

to have the perfect power-to-weight ratio and is beautifully balanced. In fact, we like it so much that I even cut some single 2x4s with it, which I never do with our Big Foots. We also noticed that you can easily check or change the brushes on the Sawsquatch. You have to disassemble the Big Foot saw to access both brush caps.

I wish I could report that we love the Diablo blade that comes with the saw, but we don't. After making about 40 crosscuts with both saws, the blades wouldn't make a perfectly square cut. The blades are super thin, which might be the problem. The 36-tooth blades included with our Big Foot saws have also warped, but not as quickly. Unfortunately, those are the only two 10 1/4-inch diamond-knockout blades I've seen, so our choices are limited. We would really appreciate a stiffer blade.

THE BOTTOM LINE

The new 10 1/4-inch Skilsaw Sawsquatch felt great in the hand and didn't struggle with any of our crosscuts or rips in 4-by Douglas fir—and it costs about the same as a 10 1/4-inch Big Foot saw. We already own two Big Foots, and they have served us well. But if we were starting from scratch,

we'd definitely buy the Sawsquatch for its more powerful motor and better ergonomics. A warp-resistant blade would make it even better.

The model SPT70WM-22 that we tried has a three-prong plug, while the model SPT70WM-72 has a twist-lock plug. The rip fence is sold separately. By the way, the Sawsquatch comes with a reassuring 180-day money-back guarantee.

SPT70WM-22 Specs

- Blade diameter: 10 1/4 inches
- Weight (with blade, wrench, and cord): 18.5 pounds
- Amps: 15
- RPM: 4,600
- Cutting depth at 0°: 3 11/16 inches
- Cutting depth at 45°: 2 3/4 inches
- Cutting depth at 51°: 2 1/2 inches
- Price: \$450
- Included with saw: multifunction blade wrench, Diablo blade
- Warranty: 1 year, 180-day money-back guarantee

Sim Ayers owns SBE Builders, in Discovery Bay, Calif.

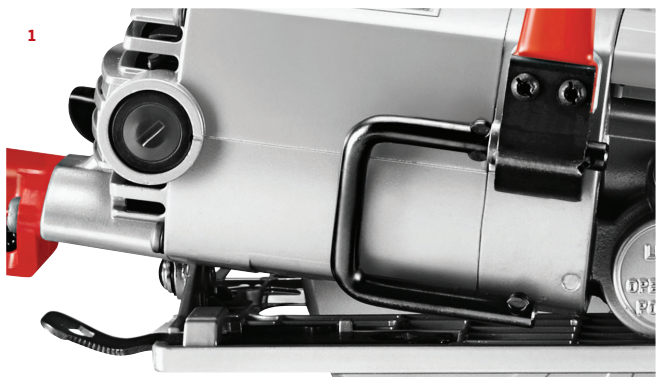


QUICK-CHANGE NAILER HOOK

We reviewed the Pneuhook universal quick-change hang hook for pneumatic framing and roofing nailers back in the June 2014 issue. It's equipped with a coupler and a male plug so you can connect the Pneuhook to the nailer's male plug and the air hose to the Pneuhook. Swapping the hook between multiple nailers is a breeze.

At the time of the review, the hook was made of powder-coated steel and cost \$30 or \$40 depending on the coupler and plug type. Pneuhook inventor and veteran carpenter Scott Jacobson reports that the hook is now made of stainless steel for lifetime resistance to corrosion, but the price remains the same. You can order one at pneuhook.com. —B.G.

1. Like the latest 7 1/4-inch Skilsaw wormdrives, the Sawsquatch carries a multifunction wrench in the base and has a rafter hook. But the Sawsquatch has a longer motor that generates more torque.



2, 3. On site, the Sawsquatch easily crosscut 4-by framing and ripped 3-bys and 4-bys without bogging down.





Simple and Compact Bluetooth Laser Distance Meter

BY BRUCE GREENLAW

After testing 17 laser distance meters in the past few years, I think there's no such thing as a universal laser distance meter for residential and light-commercial work.

If you want extreme versatility, for instance, you can buy the Bosch GLM 100 C. Costing \$300, it can measure distances with a simple point and click, as well as measure indirectly around obstacles, read angles, and clamp into an optional rail to become a 2-foot electronic spirit level—and it's an exceptional estimator, too. A built-in Bluetooth module allows you to pair it with an iOS or Android device and use a free app to store, manage, and share measurements.

Then again, you can choose an uncomplicated compact like the two-button Spectra Precision QM75, which is strictly designed for installation work. Costing around \$125, it can measure distances or take a continuous reading when moving toward or away from a target, period.

For me though, the new Bluetooth-enabled Leica Disto E7100i (leica-geosystems.us), which costs \$150, might be the sweet spot. I just put one through a quick scrimmage, and it's unique.

FEATURES

The E7100i is one of the tiniest and simplest models I've seen. It weighs just 3 ¼ ounces, is as slender as my utility knife, is dust and water resistant, and has been drop-tested onto a hard surface from one meter. It can measure distances up to 200 feet, take continuous readings, calculate areas, and display your last two values until turned off. It's accurate to 1/16 inch and shows fractions down to 1/32 inch. The display is backlit for an easy read.

The setup isn't entirely intuitive. The E7100i can beep to confirm operations, or be muted to measure quietly. But you need to press the middle buttons simultaneously for two seconds to turn the beep on or off. Also, you must press the area button for two seconds to switch between fractional inches, feet and inches, decimal feet, and meters.

The E7100i also has a Bluetooth Smart module that allows you to pair it with compatible computers and iOS or Android devices at the push of a button, which opens the door for designers and estimators. For starters, you can scan a QR code on the package to download the free "Disto sketch" app, which

I did with my iPhone 6. That allowed me to snap photos with the phone, draw dimension lines on them with a finger, and then take the measurements with the E7100i and easily drop them next to the appropriate dimension lines. You can also sketch simple drawings with a finger and insert measurements in the same way. It's easy to add labels and comments to the photos and drawings, and even easier to email the visuals as PDF files. This isn't a powerful app, but it might come in handy for quickly sharing dimensions of existing spaces and details.

Better yet, Bluetooth-enabled Leicas, including the E7100i, are the only models that can be used with Chief Architect design software, including "Premier" and "Interiors" for PCs and "Room Planner" for iOS devices. I downloaded the free Room Planner app with an iPhone 6 and gave it a try. The app allows you to create floor plans and 3D models and to insert everything from doors and siding to furniture and cars. Once I added the app's Dimension Bundle, which cost \$1.99, I could use the E7100i to push field measurements of existing spaces directly into Room Planner drawings, which is a time-saver for remodeling. You can email the drawings, attach them to a text message, or share them in other ways. Other E7100i-compatible third-party apps are also available.

THUMBS UP

As a basic standalone laser distance meter, the Leica Disto E7100i is hard to beat. It's simple, precise, and rugged, and fits into a narrow toolbelt pocket. And the Bluetooth Smart module works with compatible mobile devices and computers, which is a bonus for remodeling contractors.

Disto E7100i Specs

- Power: two AAA batteries
- Range: 6 inches to 200 feet
- Accuracy: ± 1/16 inch
- Smallest fraction: 1/32 inch
- Price: \$150
- Included in kit: two AAA batteries, removable pocket clip, belt pouch
- Warranty: lifetime

Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC.