

BY TIM UHLER



Field Tested: Paslode's Cordless XP Framing Nailer

In 2012, I reviewed the Paslode and Bostitch fuel-powered framing nailers for *Tools of the Trade*. At the time, I could take or leave cordless framing nailers and didn't end up using them after writing the article. In 2014, I also reviewed the DeWalt cordless framing nailer. This gun doesn't use an internal combustion engine, but the rotor of the brushless motor acts as a flywheel. You can also see the battery level, which is an obvious plus. We ended

up using this gun quite often, especially for pick-up work. So I was curious to see how the new cordless Paslode compared.

FEATURES

Paslode recently re-engineered the vent design for its cordless framing gun, which increased power, and the company also reformulated the fuel used in its cordless guns to allow them to function in colder weather.

The XP comes with a 7-volt lithium-ion battery, which Paslode claims can last long enough to shoot up to 9,000 nails before needing to be recharged. The battery registers into two slots, allowing for standby and ready modes (1). The belt hook is large enough to hook on 2-by material (when it's positioned opposite the battery) and is also adjustable. The depth of drive can be adjusted quickly and without any tools by squeezing

Photos by Tim Uhler

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the two buttons on the nosepiece (2).

The nosepiece is aggressive and makes it easy to toenail accurately, even in engineered woods like LSL. We found we could fit only one strip of nails at a time in the magazine unless we cut a stick in half, but the trade-off is that this gun will fit into a standard 16-inch-on-center stud or joist bay. It's impossible to dry fire the gun, too, because of the nail lockout on the magazine.

I was happy with how this gun performed. While shooting through three boxes of nails and two gas canisters, we did not have one jam or misfire. We purchased the gas-and-nail-combination boxes at Lowe's and have found that the gas lasts a little longer than the box of nails, so over time we've accumulated gas canisters.

We had no trouble shooting into LVL and often had to back the depth of drive off when shooting into Doug fir. This gun also shoots pretty quickly; not as quickly as our Max High Pressure guns, but plenty fast for pick-up work, blocking, and other light framing (nonproduction).

For us, this gun has proved to be useful, and we've used it every day since we got it. More and more we are able to go cordless—and now hoseless—and it's making life a lot easier. For example, we recently framed a 500-square-foot deck on a site that was cov-

ered in mud and deep puddles. We framed the whole thing using the Paslode XP and didn't have to drag hoses through the mud.

We are currently using this gun and the DeWalt to frame a 2,100-square-foot floor. Because there is a lot of blocking and nailing I-joists over girders, we don't need a fast gun—and working hoseless in the rain is a bonus.

FAST AND LIGHTWEIGHT

After using the DeWalt and the Paslode side-by-side for the last month, I slightly prefer the Paslode. It is lighter and a bit faster, and I would highly recommend it to any framing crew. It's great for rolling trusses, pick-up framing, blocking—any framing task where dragging a hose is a nuisance or a liability.

To be clear, the Paslode only barely edges out the DeWalt because of its lighter weight and faster firing speed. The DeWalt is convenient, though, and we continue to use it, as well.

I found the Paslode online for \$400. That includes the company's two-year "Service Promise" guarantee that provides free service and repair.

Tim Uhler is lead framer for Pioneer Builders, in Port Orchard, Wash.

PORTABLE DIESEL POWER

With a weight of 247 pounds (empty), the Generac XD5000E may be less "portable" than other jobsite generators, but its heft makes up for itself in features. The diesel-powered Yanmar LW air-cooled direct-injection engine provides significantly longer runtimes—Generac estimates 32 hours at 50% load (compared with eight to 10 hours for gas-powered models). Harmonic distortion runs at less than 6%, for cleaner operation of sensitive loads like smartphone chargers, laptops, and testing equipment. When the unit runs low on oil, it automatically shuts down, and a 120/240V selector switch provides power for any of your jobsite tools. A single-touch electric start means you won't have to put your coffee cup down to fire it up. Advanced emission technology ensures Tier IV compliance from the EPA so it burns diesel cleanly too. An integral lifting eye allows the unit to be moved by machine, or a wheel kit can be purchased separately. The price tag is a hefty \$3,700, but according to Generac's product manager, Matthew Moose, the longer runtimes and long service life mean more readily available power, so no downtime. It comes with a two-year limited warranty. —Chris Ermides is a senior editor at Tools of the Trade.





Inflatable ‘Shims’ Work

BY CHRIS ERMIDES

I recently had the opportunity to test out Calculated Industries’ new leveling tool, the AirShim (1). This little inflatable bag is designed to support up to 300 pounds and span gaps from 3/32 inch to 2 1/2 inches (2). A hand pump fills the bag, and a push-button valve deflates it, allowing the user to regulate the bag’s thickness as needed. An almost identical tool—the WinBag—is offered by Red Horse USA; it’s designed to support up to 220 pounds and span gaps from 3/32 inch to 2 inches.

It’s called a shim, but it functions more like a pry bar. Unlike pry bars, however, this handy tool doesn’t leave a mark on the workpiece, because it’s made of a proprietary synthetic material that stays slightly pliable as it’s inflated. One of the nicest features of the AirShim is that it fits snugly into a tool pouch and doesn’t add any noticeable weight. When you’re on a ladder, this is particularly helpful.

I used the AirShim to set several large casement windows on a remodeling project; for this application, I found the inflatable bag to be impressively accurate and easy to use. When setting windows, I always start

with 1/4-inch shims beneath the sill to leave room for low-expanding spray foam, and then I add shims as needed to level the window. Leveling larger windows this way can be fussy because the weight of the window makes it challenging to micro-adjust and often requires a pry bar to relieve the weight as I add shims.

With the AirShim, I simply set the window and had a helper inside place the shim under the low side of the sill. As one of us read the level, the other stood inside and inflated or deflated the bag as needed. Inflating in small increments was easy to control with a squeeze of the hand. I expected the bag to kick the window out of plane with the wall as it was inflated, but the bag stayed flat and true so this never happened. Deflating the bag was easy as well; all it required was pushing a small button to incrementally release the air, lowering the window (3). Once the window was level, we nailed it off from the exterior to keep it in the desired position, added wood shims as needed, then deflated the bag.

Along with setting windows with this

inflatable bag, I plan on setting cabinets with it, but there are many other ways I can see this tool being used. Framers, remodeling contractors, trim carpenters, plumbers—and anyone else who owns a level and a pry bar and who uses shims—will find this a welcome addition to their tool arsenal.

AirShim Specs

Size: 6 inches by 6 1/2 inches
 Weight: 3 1/2 ounces
 Rated: 300 pounds (SGS certified)
 Cost: \$23
airshim.com

WinBag Specs

Size: 6 inches by 6 1/2 inches
 Weight: 3 1/2 ounces
 Rated: 220 pounds
 Cost: \$20
winbagusa.com

Chris Ermides is a senior editor at Tools of the Trade.

Photos by Chris Ermides