



## TOOL BOX

### The Little Saw With a Big Bite



*The Tiger Cub delivers smooth and fast one-handed cuts.*

How often have you had to notch an in-place stud on the inside of a small cabinet? Or make a one-handed cut from an arm's reach away because you couldn't get the ladder any closer? Porter Cable has just made these jobs a bit easier by introducing the Tiger Cub model 9647 to its line of reciprocating saws. The Tiger Cub is light enough to operate with one hand and is small enough to fit into many tight places. It is also one of the smoothest and fastest cutting reciprocating saws I have ever used.

**Small is beautiful.** The body of the Tiger Cub is a straight, handleless barrel about 3 inches in diameter, a convenient size to grip with one hand. From butt to shoe, it measures 13 1/2 inches – allowing it to fit horizontally between studs and joists framed 16 inches on-center. A side handle can also be screwed on to either side near the shoe if extra leverage and control are needed for making fast or precise cuts.

This versatile design does have a few drawbacks. The handleless body eliminates having a trigger-controlled on/off switch and variable speed adjustment. Instead, a sliding on/off switch on the top of the tool housing slides forward and automatically locks on. But be careful! If it is in this locked position when the tool is plugged in, it will turn on. The Tiger cub has a variable-speed motor ranging from 400 to 2,600 strokes per minute. The speed is controlled by an adjustable wheel on the butt of the housing. The speed control takes two hands to adjust while the tool is running and offers less control than a trigger-type adjustment.

The Tiger Cub weighs just 5 pounds. Compared to the Milwaukee No. 6507 Sawzall, which weighs 11 pounds, the Tiger Cub feels like a toy. Yet, the little saw has a 4.8-amp motor and a 1-inch stroke (compared to the 4.0 amp motor and 3/4-inch stroke of the Milwaukee). These features make the Tiger Cub a very powerful and smooth-cutting reciprocating saw.

**Performance.** To evaluate the performance of the Tiger Cub, I ran a series of test cuts in different materials. Using a new Lenox metal-cutting blade in each saw, the Tiger Cub and the Milwaukee cut 12-gauge steel studs in equal time. However, it was easier to hold the stud down with one hand while cutting with the little saw. Using a new Lenox rough-cutting wood blade, I was able to cut through a pressure-treated 2x12 in about 17 seconds with the Tiger Cub. With the Milwaukee it took about 20 seconds. While a couple of seconds per cut isn't enough to inspire me to junk my favorite old saw, the little saw's performance over the Milwaukee speaks well for it.

Reciprocating saws aren't generally known for their precision. Yet, from time to time builders must make accurate cuts with them. The longer stroke of the Tiger Cub does make for a smooth cut and it was remarkably easy to hold a line while cutting both framing material and 3/4-inch CDX plywood. The short stroke of the Milwaukee seemed to cause more vibration, making it harder to hold a line.

The Tiger Cub's shoe is fixed, unlike the pivoting shoe on the Milwaukee and Porter Cable's larger Tiger saws. This fixed shoe seems to work as well as the pivoting shoe for holding the work steady. And it seems to work a little better for making plunge cuts. A minor drawback is that the shoe is closed on one side making it difficult to hold the blade clamp open for changing blades.

I am hard pressed to say whether the Tiger Cub could replace the larger, rougher-cutting, but possibly more durable, reciprocating saws such as the Milwaukee Sawzall. It is questionable how long the plastic boot on the lightweight Tiger Cub would hold up to the daily rigors of the job site. But the Tiger Cub is a highly versatile and very maneuvering tool. And, cut for cut, in short-term testing, it seemed to keep up with the larger reciprocating saw. The price – as low as \$115 including a well-designed, all-metal box – is certainly competitive.

– Clayton DeKorne