Super Demolition Saw

by Clayton DeKorne

Milwaukee introduced the *Super Sawzall* a couple of years ago, but it's never too late to sing its praises. The new saw has a number of features that significantly improve the old model, transforming the previous standard in demolition saws into a more aggressive cutter.

The Super Sawzall features dial-in speed control, and an adjustable shoe for better control when cutting heavy material, such as these iron pipes.

Big Bite

I've owned the original Sawzall for about ten years. So when I used the new Super Sawzall, the first thing I noticed was how fast it cut. To test this, I ran a series of cuts through a 2x8, using new blades in each saw. I was able to consistently cut more than twice as fast with the new saw as I could with the old saw.

This performance is due in part to a beefy eight-amp motor that doesn't slow down for knots or nails. (By comparison, the old saw has a four-amp motor.) The new motor is combined with electronic variable-speed control that's designed to hold some of the extra current in reserve. Under load, the strokes per minute (spm) tend to slow down, so the electronics dose more current to maintain full speed.

The upgraded saw also has a longer blade travel — 1 1/4 inch , compared with 3/4 inch on the previous model. This difference doesn't sound like much, but it noticeably speeds cutting.

The newer saw is surprisingly smooth to operate, too. Much of this comes from the aggressive bite that allows you to keep moving through tough-to-cut materials, such as a thick nail-embedded beam. Since the saw doesn't snag on nails, and you don't get jerked around by the saw as much Inside the saw, the reciprocating drive is built with a counterbalance mechanism that absorbs vibration. It glides through cuts even when the blade is bent or restricted (cutting the nails between a floor deck and wall plates, for example). In these situations the old saw would vibrate your brains out.

The new Sawzall weighs in at almost nine pounds. You'll feel the added weight at the end of the day, but you'll have to bear down on the tool a lot less when pushing through heavy stock.

Speed Control

The Super Sawzall has a variable-speed trigger, and a dual-range switch that selects a high-speed range between 0 to 2,800 spm or a low-speed range of 0 to 2,000. Plus, the saw has a separate wheel to dial in the maximum spm.

In general, you want to select the low range for heavy work, such as cutting steel or wood that's heavily infested with nails. If you're just slicing through studs and lots of plaster and lath, use the high-speed range. Once you're in a speed range, you can dial in the maximum speed. Then you have the variable-speed trigger to get the cut started.

Added Features

The Super Sawzall has a number of small refinements, not least of which is an indent on the front boot that holds a hex key for the blade clamp. This keeps the key completely out of the way. It won't snag on anything as it does if it's attached to the cord. And since the key is free when you pull it from this indent, instead of bound by a little rubber cord, you don't have to worry about the cord twirling around the key as you remove a blade.

The blade clamp is much easier to operate. It's larger and holds the blade better. In hours of heavy use, the blade never vibrated loose.

The front shoe is now adjustable, too. A recessed lever at the front of the tool holds the shoe in any position within 2 inches of the boot. With the old saw, you often can't use the shoe unless you hold the saw at an angle. But this isn't always possible near the floor or an inside corner if your depth of cut is limited. With the new adjustable shoe, however, you have much more control because you can slide the shoe out to meet the wall while keeping the saw straight.

Beefy Blades

One of the newest features of the Super Sawzall is a line of new blades that was just introduced this year. These blades are a full one inch wide and about 3/32 inch thick. They're stiff enough that they won't easily deflect while you're cutting. The shank is much wider than on conventional Sawzall blades, so you need a separate blade clamp. The changeover to the new clamp is easy enough, but unfortunately the clamp won't fit the old Sawzall.

At this point, the only blades available are heavy-duty metal cutters. These have eight teeth per inch. They chew through 2-inch gas line and old galvanized plumbing, for instance. These blades are also aggressive enough for wood. While a true wood blade would be much better, I was able to make precise finish cuts in 4x6 beam stock. The blade is stiff enough that I could follow my line through a curve, without the blade deflecting. The blade stayed true to the line on both faces of the cut.

The new Sawzall lists for about $300, including the case. It sells retail between about $180 and $200. This is about $50 more than the old Sawzall, but in my estimation, it's well worth the price. For more information, contact Milwaukee Electric Tool Corp., 13135 W. Lisbon Rd., Brookfield, WI 53005; 414/781-3600. ■