Hose-Free Siding Stapler

by Jeremy Hess

As a remodeler, one of my favorite tools is my Impulse framing nailer. Aside from the obvious benefit of quicker setups, it saves me from having to drag dirty hoses through a customer's clean house or subject customers to the annoying drone of a compressor. When our company was contracted to do a couple of large room additions, I thought it would be a good opportunity to test a lesser-known Impulse tool, the IM200-S16 Utility Stapler. I wanted to see if the Impulse stapler would prove as valuable to our business as our other Impulse nailguns.

Specs

The IM200-S16 weighs 6 1/2 pounds and operates like the other guns in the Impulse family. An internal combustion engine, powered by MAPP gas, drives the nail, and a six-volt battery provides the spark. The bright orange stapler shoots 1/2-inch crown, galvanized staples from 3/4 inch to 2 inches. Instead of the new oval-shaped battery, the stapler uses the older-style round one. The full-length yellow fuel cells more commonly used with the straight-magazine 16-gauge trim nailer (model IM250 II) provide the fuel. According to Paslode, one fuel cell will drive 2,400 staples and one battery charge can handle 4,000 cycles. I found those estimates to be accurate.

Applications

According to Paslode, the stapler has many applications, from suspended ceiling to soffits, but I think it's generally intended for vinyl siding installation. Its adjustable nosepiece prevents overdriven staples that would otherwise prevent the siding from moving with changes in temperature. To permit the installation of vinyl over foam sheathing or fanfold insulation, a "handlebar" work element rests against the vinyl siding on one side, while the other side floats over the foam.

The IM200-S16 can also be used to fasten OSB or plywood sheathing. It drives the staples straight and consistently, without any problems. The cement-coated staples hold very well — as I found out while removing a sheet of OSB previously installed on an out-of-square wall panel. Although the tool is fine for OSB and plywood sheathing, I had problems with foam sheathing. Not surprisingly, depressing the contact element caused it to break through the foil face, crushing the insulation.

The Verdict

I really enjoyed using the IM200-S16 for hanging vinyl siding. Once I located the studs behind the sheathing and house wrap, installation went fast, and my customer appreciated being spared the noise of constant hammer blows. While I've always used large-head aluminum nails, most siding manufacturers see stapling as an acceptable alternative, and it definitely goes faster than hand nailing. Although I had some concern about using galvanized staples that could eventually rust and stain the siding, the manufacturer says it has never had any complaints about streaking or rust stains.

Even though the stapler worked great for vinyl, I found it easier to install corner posts and other trims with hand-driven nails. Hand-driving a few nails into the trim pieces keeps them from moving around while you're trying to measure and fit the siding. A built-in belt clip keeps the stapler close by while hand nailing.

I did have one problem with the

The IM200-S16 has a forked nosepiece, so one leg of the staple goes in the nail slot and the other goes above. The depth of drive is more consistent than that of a pneumatic stapler.

For foam insulation and other soft sheathing, the manufacturer includes a "handlebar" work element. The aluminum bar rides on the siding and provides a solid surface for depressing the contact foot.

gun, which became apparent during this year's unusually harsh winter. Cold temperatures reduce fuel pressure inside the canister, causing misfires from insufficient fuel flow. As a result, I had to resort to hand nailing for a few days. Although Paslode claims that the tools can be used down to 20°F, I had problems at temperatures just under 40°F.

In conclusion, I'd guess that stapling went about 50% faster than hand nailing, and I really liked being able to install a centered fastener, driven to the perfect depth, by simply pulling a trigger. If I installed vinyl siding every day, I would definitely invest in one of these tools, but it's a little pricey for occasional use. For siding contractors and others who use pneumatic staplers on a regular basis, I think it would be an excellent time saver.

The IM200-S16 comes in a blow-molded plastic case with a battery, safety glasses, and a no-mar vinyl-siding contact element for $499.

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Dust-Free Drywall Sanding

by Patrick McCombe

I've wanted to try Porter-Cable's long-handled drywall sander since it was introduced almost ten years ago. The manufacturer claims that the tool is easier and three times faster than hand sanding, and that it eliminates more than 90% of drywall dust when it's connected to a good vacuum.

I recently tried out the tool on the second floor of a newly remodeled 1,400-square-foot cape. Sanding the sloping walls (along with the ceiling) by hand would have meant a lot of tiring, over-the-head sanding. In addition, the owners were living downstairs, so anything that promised to make the job go faster or control dust deserved serious consideration.

A large plastic nut secures the 9-inch sanding disc on Porter-Cable's drywall sander. The hook-and-loop disc is available in grits from 80 to 220 in packs of five. Replacement discs are packaged with a foam backing pad and sell for about $22.

Operation

After first seeing this tool at my local dealer I wondered how the rather aggressive-looking sanding disc performed in the real world. I've always thought it looked ideal for the caked-on applications that you expect from rookies but a little intense for more ordinary sanding. The tool seems especially scary because the 9-inch spinning disc prevents you from seeing your work, and, unlike hand sanding,

The red dial controls speed from 1,500 to 2,000 rpm. The variable-speed feature is handy while you're learning to use the tool, but once you get familiar with how it handles, there's no reason to go less than full power.

you don't feel the increased resistance that comes from sanding joint tape. As a result, I was concerned that I'd be grinding away the seam tape and paper facing.

The sander comes with a 100-grit sanding disc, which the manufacturer suggests is the best general-purpose grit. Given my concern about oversanding, I thought it seemed a little coarse, so I opted for 180 instead. I dialed the variable-speed motor way down and gritted my teeth as I touched the sanding head to the wall. I expected sanding action similar to that of an angle grinder, but I was surprised when it turned out to be almost sedate. I quickly got a feel for the tool and turned it up to full speed. Soon it became clear that a heavier grit would make the job go faster, so I switched to 120. After about half an hour, I was running the tool effectively without really thinking about it.

Dust Collection

In my mind, the tool's real merit lies in the dust collection system; otherwise, why not use a $20 pole sander? Once the tool is connected to Porter-Cable's 7814 vacuum, I think the significant investment is worthwhile. Unless you go past an inside corner or window opening, where a little cloud of dust escapes, there's little evidence that drywall dust is even being created.

While a brush on the sanding head prevents airborne particles, the real work is accomplished by a disposable dust bag and a good pleated filter. Typical of dust-collecting vacuums, the PC vac has an outlet that triggers the vac motor when the sander is turned on.

The Verdict

The vacuum and the sander both work well, but you'll still need to do a little touch-up by hand because the round disc won't reach all the way into corners. I really like the 13-foot hose and long handle, which allowed me to move around without constantly dragging the vacuum behind me. I also like how the motor and articulated sanding head are on opposite ends of the tool for better balance.

A disposable dust bag combined with a pleated filter (left) is very effective at keeping dust out of the air. The pleated filter works okay by itself, too, but you have to shake it out regularly to maintain suction. A ribbed bar with a handle to the outside shakes the filter so you don't have to open the housing every time (below).

But this tool is expensive, and if you don't have a dust-collecting vac, you'll have to add in that cost, as well ($350). Spending $800 on a system to sand drywall might seem ridiculous, but the vacuum works better than any I've ever owned. When you compare the price of the vac with the difficulty in finding professional finishers for small jobs, spending the money starts to make more sense. In addition, few things upset customers more than drywall dust, and showing them the tool (or a picture) during a sales presentation could give you a competitive edge.

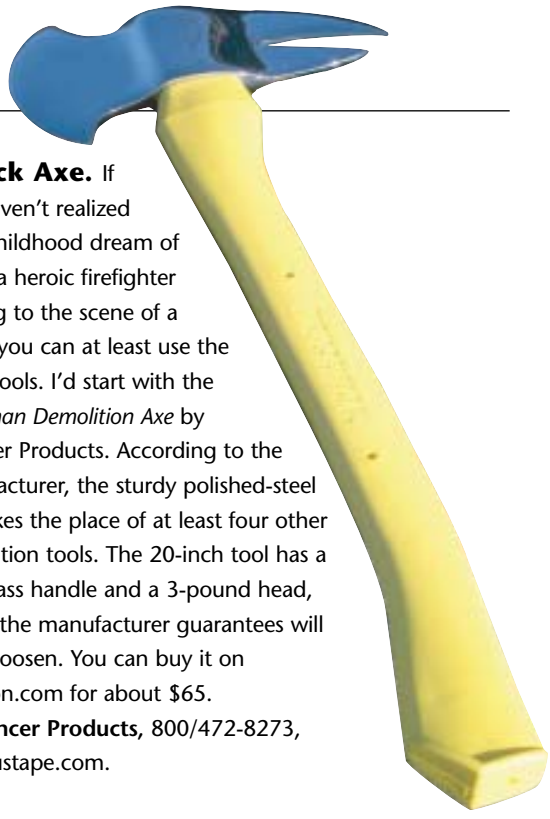
A green light tells you that a tool is connected and the vac is ready for dust collection. Once the tool is shut off, the vac continues running for a few seconds to clear the hose.

DEMOLITION TOOLS

Scraping By. Stripping a floor's worth of glue-down carpet or vinyl tile can be a huge job, but you can make it go faster and easier with a power scraper like the *SFCS16 Floor Covering Scraper* from Stow. A 3/4-horsepower motor powers straight or angled blades from 6 to 16 inches, and toothed attachments are available for removing ceramic tile and hardwood. The 8-inch rubber wheels have built-in scrapers to prevent the buildup of adhesive that could throw off the blade angle. According to the maker, the 130-pound machine will run on a 15-amp circuit. If you don't want to spend $800 to buy one, you can usually rent this or a similar machine for about $65 to $75 a day.
Stow, 877/289-7869, www.stowmfg.com.

Stack the Deck.
Removing decking or board sheathing is a breeze with the *Duckbill Deck Wrecker*. The high-quality tool has a long handle for maximum leverage and a reversible head, so you can use it even when you're working right against the house or railing. I used it to remove about 400 square feet of 1x6 roof sheathing on a remodeling project. It was fast and easy to use, and the prying fingers are long enough to remove even 16d nails without an additional fulcrum. The tool seems absolutely bulletproof. My guess is that using it on one or two jobs would return your $70 investment.

Forrester Manufacturing, 866/256-4499, www.deckwrecker.com.



Attack Axe. If you haven't realized your childhood dream of being a heroic firefighter rushing to the scene of a blaze, you can at least use the same tools. I'd start with the *Truckman Demolition Axe* by Spencer Products. According to the manufacturer, the sturdy polished-steel axe takes the place of at least four other demolition tools. The 20-inch tool has a fiberglass handle and a 3-pound head, which the manufacturer guarantees will never loosen. You can buy it on Amazon.com for about $65.

Spencer Products, 800/472-8273, www.ustape.com.

Slide Rule. Even though slide-action nail pullers have been around longer than anybody can remember, you don't see them very often. Crescent's *Model 56 Nail Puller* is typical of the genre. It has an 18-inch handle for plenty of leverage and a 2-pound slide hammer that almost guarantees a good grip on the nail. To use it, just position the jaws over the nail head, slide the hammer a few times, and lever out the nail. The other small lever near the jaws acts as a fulcrum while increasing grip on the nail. It's a little expensive, but when you need it, nothing else works as well as any slide-action nail puller. You can usually find one for about $50.

Cooper Hand Tools, 919/362-1670, www.cooperhandtools.com.