EDITED BY BRUCE GREENLAW

Two New FatMax Tools

Stanley has introduced several innovative hand tools lately, including the FatMax 17-ounce Anti-Vibe Framing Hammer (model FMHT51244) and 25-foot Auto-Locking Tape Rule (model FMHT33338). Terry Goodrich, a hands-on Oregon framing contractor who employs 12 to 20 carpenters and frames up to 200 single- and multifamily houses per year, evaluated both of these tools for us.

ANTI-VIBE FRAMING HAMMER

Stanley's first Anti-Vibe hammers came out in 1998 and tamed shock waves with a perforated steel core in the handle and a vibration-damping tuning fork at the end. The new FatMax Anti-Vibe Framing Hammer still has a tuning fork, but it also has a shock-absorbing rubber collar between the head and the handle. In addition, it has two layers of shock-absorbing rubber in the grip on top of a high-impact polypropylene jacket that runs the length of the handle directly over the steel (which protrudes just below the head to protect the hammer body against damage from overstrikes). The head weighs just 17 ounces, continuing the trend toward lighter steel heads designed to compete with pricier titanium ones. A magnetic nail starter makes it easier to start nails with one hand.

"I didn't expect to like this hammer," Goodrich says. "I'd already gone from a 32-ounce framing hammer to a 28-ouncer to a 22-ouncer to reduce my wear and tear, and couldn't imagine framing with a 17-ouncer. But I love it. It has plenty of driving power, great balance, and a comfortable grip, and I appreciate the nail starter. I'm now using the Anti-Vibe full-time."

The FatMax Anti-Vibe Framing Hammer sells for about $40.

AUTO-LOCK TAPE MEASURE

Auto-locking tape measures normally have a spring-loaded bottom lever that you squeeze when extending the blade and release to lock the blade. Squeeze again and the blade retracts. Stanley's new 25-foot FatMax auto-locking tape measure simplifies that procedure. It locks automatically when the blade stops extending; to release or retract the blade, you simply press the top-forward release button. To override the auto-lock, slide the same button up until it clicks.

The new two-piece blade hook is also unique. According to Stanley, most framers like oversize hooks that can grab edges from the top, bottom, or sides, while finish carpenters like standard hooks because they don't get in the way. This tape has a standard hook along with a removable, oversize hook attachment that stores in the tape body and snaps onto the hook rivets when you need it.

"I like the new tape's auto-lock and override," Goodrich says. "But the bottom edge of the blade hook is flush with the base of the tape measure, which makes it hard to hook the edge of a material without extending the blade first. That extra step wastes time, and it drives me nuts. I'll stick with my other FatMax tapes for now."

The FatMax Auto-Lock 25-Foot Tape Rule costs about $25.

Bruce Greenlaw is a contributing editor to JLC.

HEAVY LIFTERS

Telehandlers resemble forklifts, but they have a telescoping boom for far more versatility.

Frequent *JLC* contributor Tim Uhler says that Pioneer Builders, the Port Orchard, Wash., company where he is a lead framer, bought its first machine—a '70s Badger Dynamics model—years ago for $7,500 and instantly saved some hard labor by using it to lift an I-joist package to a second floor. Pioneer now owns two Ingersoll Rand models: a VR-90 that it bought used in 2003 for $28,000 and a bigger VR-1056 that it purchased used in 2005 for about $80,000. The latter has a maximum capacity of 10,000 pounds and a maximum lift of 56 feet, with two outriggers up front for added stability when extending heavy loads.

"We use the VR-1056 on site every day for moving materials, lifting beams, raising walls, and other muscular chores," Uhler says. "Being able to grab 60 or 70 sheets of sheathing and move them in two minutes instead of lugging them manually is a godsend."

Tap into an engaging discussion about telehandlers on the "Please help me buy a Lull" thread in the *JLC* Rough Carpentry forum at jlconline.com. *—B.G.*

Werner Aluminum Pump-Jack System

BY SIM AYERS

Pump-jack scaffolding is ideal for sidewall work because you can erect the length you need with minimal hassle and adjust the infinitely variable plank height on the fly so you're always working at a comfortable height.

For years, we've used steel pump jacks with poles made of doubled 2x4s. This economical combination gets the job done, but the jacks inevitably dent the poles. While cranking the jacks down, we often have to hit them with a hammer to bypass the dents, which can trigger short but scary free-falls.

When we recently used Werner's aluminum pump-jack system (wernerco.com) to side and trim a house, though, we could relax. The aluminum jacks ride on structural aluminum poles instead of doubled 2x4s, gripping a rubber strip on the outer edge of the poles. No more scary rides down the poles. In fact, compared with using our old pump jacks, using these is like taking an elevator. We used 6-foot poles, which can travel in a pickup bed, but they also come in lengths of 12, 18, and 24 feet. The poles can stack to a maximum working height of 50 feet.

Werner's PJ-100 pump jacks cost $166 each, and the poles cost $85 to $408, depending on the length. Pole braces cost $65 to $72 each. Accessories include work-bench supports, end-rail kits, safety nets, and nesting stages. According to Werner, all of the components are interchangeable with Alum-A-Pole's pump-jack scaffolding components.

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

Photo: bottom left, Tim Uhler

Bosch Dimpler Drywall Driver

BY MYRON FERGUSON

Drywall screw guns are the standard tool for fastening drywall panels to wood or metal framing. Common corded models have a trigger lock-on button for continuous operation, a magnetic insert-bit holder that prevents screws from falling off the bit, and a nosepiece that fits over the bit holder to serve as an adjustable depth stop.

They also have a clutch consisting of two mating ratchet plates held apart by a spring. At rest, the clutch isolates the bit holder from the motor, allowing you to feed screws onto the bit with the trigger locked on. Once you load a screw, you push the tip against the drywall to engage the clutch, which drives the screw until the nosepiece hits the drywall and the clutch slips. Properly set, the unblemished countersunk screws leave a perfect dimple without tearing the drywall face paper or damaging the bit. The noses easily pop off so you can extract errant screws in reverse, swap bits, or work without the depth stop.

These tools cost about $80 to $180, which is reasonable for drywallers but hard to justify for remodelers who only occasionally hang drywall. One alternative is to chuck a heavy-duty Bosch Dimpler drywall driver into your existing corded or cordless drill. It will give you most of the benefits of a dedicated screw gun at a fraction of the cost.

The Dimpler has been around for years but was recently redesigned to provide better access into inside corners. Like drywall screw guns, it has a magnetic insert-bit holder, a depth stop, and a clutch. Its depth stop is fixed, though, so the tool consistently countersinks screwheads a millimeter deep and leaves a slight dimple. To change bits or to remove a screw, you simply push and twist the head, which exposes more of the bit and defeats the depth stop. Another push and twist resets the head for driving. You can't lock on your drill trigger and load screws while the motor runs, as you can with a screw gun, but that is a minor inconvenience.

The Dimpler is useful even for drywall contractors. I install panels using a drywall screw gun and then circle back later with a cordless drill and Dimpler to add screws where necessary or to set any high ones.

If you buy this tool online, make sure that you aren't buying the old version with the same D60498 part number (that version doesn't have a blue nose). The new Dimpler costs about $12.

Myron Ferguson is a drywall contractor in Middle Grove, N.Y., and presents the Drywall Trade Secrets clinic at JLC Live.

Photo: left, Linda Ferguson

QUICK CORNERS

Bullnose drywall corners are common in my area. To run baseboard around them, you can either butt the baseboard to pre-made radiused wood corner blocks—sold in standard base profiles by building suppliers—or you can cut three-piece corners that use a short wedge of the base material as the transition piece. I prefer three-piece corners because the thickness of the pre-made blocks is inconsistent, which can create a sloppy transition.

You need to lay out three-piece corners precisely, though, to prevent gaps. In the past, we've made short sample corners to use as a marking gauge, which is a tedious extra step. We now use Bench Dog's compact plastic Bullnose Trim Gauge instead (benchdog.com). We just hold it over the corner and quickly mark the two required layout lines. It's dead accurate every time, and costs about $10.

—Matt Arnold owns Mattco Construction and Carpentry, in Upland, Calif.