

## Weigh In!

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# Toolbox

BY TIM UHLER



## Paslode's New 21-Degree Framing Nailer

**Paslode recently released the F350-P 21-degree** plastic-collated framing nailer. This is interesting because until now, the company's framing guns drove 30-degree paper-tape fasteners—which typically have clipped heads but are also available with offset round heads.

There is a lot to like about this gun; it's well-balanced and feels solidly made. The magazine is solid too, which should translate to fewer jams over the long run.

The tool comes from the factory set to sequential fire, but can be converted to bump fire by removing a pin, lowering the trigger, and then reinstalling the pin. It took me about five minutes to make the conversion—most of it spent trying to get the tiny rubber O-ring back onto the pin.

Features include tool-less depth of drive, a heavily rubberized grip, and a nail lock-out mechanism to prevent dry firing. The over-size trigger is a plus, as it allows me to change my grip to nail at odd angles and still

be able to reach it for firing. The F350-P comes with a belt hook, though you have to remove a screw to switch sides.

I like that the air inlet is angled slightly to the right, because it prevents the magazine from getting in the way of connecting the hose. One of the few things the gun doesn't have is an adjustable exhaust port; on this model it's fixed.

### RESIN-COLLATED NAILS

When Paslode introduced the F350-P, it also introduced 21-degree resin-collated fasteners to go with it. These are a departure from the 30-degree paper-tape nails the company is known for—and from the plastic-collated nails our crew is accustomed to using.

When you frame with plastic-collated fasteners, you are bombarded by small bits of plastic—reason enough to wear eye protection, assuming you weren't already worried about getting hit by a nail. Paslode

collates its 21-degree nails with resin—and less of it than is usually the case with plastic-collated nails. As a result, there is less of it to fly around or “pile up” on the jobsite.

According to Paslode, the resin is more rugged than plastic and the 21-degree strips are less likely to break. That was not my experience; I found they broke more frequently than the TrueSpec strips we normally use. For me, breaking is less a matter of dropping strips than bashing them with the hook of the nail gun when hanging it from the pouch of my tool bags. I solved the problem by carrying spare strips in the pouch on the opposite side from where I hook the gun.

I like the new nails but am not sure I'd be willing to pay their premium price. At about \$0.02 per nail, they cost 25% more than the TrueSpec fasteners we normally use. The cost disparity is even greater if you compare Paslode nails with some of the cheap brands that can be found at many lumberyards.

Photos by Tim Uhler



### THE BOTTOM LINE

The F350-P is a good gun. It would not be my first choice, though, if I were buying a stick nailer. We use Max high-pressure coil guns for most of our framing, though we do use stick guns for hot-dipped galvanized fasteners—which we prefer not to buy in coils. The stick nailers we currently use are a Max SN883RH2 and a Bostitch LFP-21PL—which were among the models we reviewed in 2013. We prefer these guns to the F350-P because they're each about a half-pound lighter. The Paslode does feel slightly more powerful than the Max, but it's also bulkier, and the line of sight along the right is obstructed by the depth-of-drive mechanism—which makes toenailing more difficult.

### F350-P SPECS

**Collation:** 21 degrees; resin/plastic  
**Nails:** full round head; 2 to 3 1/2 inches  
**Magazine:** top-load  
**Weight:** 8.1 pounds  
**Height:** 13 inches  
**Warranty:** 5 years  
**Price:** \$280

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



Irwin's ErgoMulti Long Nose pliers are larger than most long-nose pliers.

## Angle-Head Pliers

BY DAVID FRANE

**I recently bought** a pair of Irwin Vise-Grip ErgoMulti Long Nose Pliers, which had been on my radar since their unveiling at last year's STAFDA convention. The design intrigued me and had me wondering if the angled head would make the tool easier to use. The answer is yes; with these pliers, you can work longer and harder with less fatigue to your wrist and hand.

The 62-degree angled head provides a neutral grip position, akin to the position you use when holding a drill or impact driver. Your wrist remains straight so there's less strain on your wrist and hand. And I think the "kink" of the handles in relation to the head provides additional leverage when twisting.

The size of the tool helps too. These are 8-inch pliers, which, as long-nose pliers go, is very large. The longer-than-"normal" handles make for greater leverage when you're cutting wire, nails, and screws. The overmolded handles are hard on the back and soft where you grip, so you can squeeze

really hard without hurting your hand.

The jaws are spring-loaded and automatically open when you release the grips—a feature I love because it makes the pliers faster and easier to use. A thumb-activated catch can be used to lock the jaws shut for ease of transport and storage. The lock is tucked away in a protected spot—which is good, because it's plastic and might break if it gets bashed. But its location is such that I don't think that's likely to happen. The jaws are equipped with a straight cutter, a small crimper, strippers for 12- and 14-gauge solid and 14- and 16-gauge stranded wire, and something you don't often see—a built-in "spanner" for turning nuts and bolts. The spanner is shaped like the surface of a box wrench; it's not something I use very often but is handy to have when I need to turn a nut or bolt and there aren't any wrenches or slip-joint pliers nearby.

If the design of these pliers looks familiar, it's because they are made for Irwin by NWS, a high-end German tool company that

Photos by David Frane





sells a nearly identical model under its own label. With only limited distribution in the U.S., it makes sense NWS would manufacture tools for a large company like Irwin. Most Irwin hand tools are made in Asia, but the 11 tools currently in Irwin's Vise-Grip Cutting Pliers line are made in Germany.

The ErgoMulti Long Nose Pliers aren't cheap; I bought them for \$30 online. I enjoy using them, and they should last the rest of my life—provided I don't lose them or lend them to someone who likes them as much as I do.

*David Frane is a former editor of Tools of the Trade.*

## Universal Dust Collection

BY DOUG MAHONEY

**It's great that so many tools** are equipped with dust-collection ports these days, but unless you are committed to a single brand, it can be difficult to connect the vacuum you have to the ports on various tools. Individual adapters are available, but many carpenters I know solve the problem by placing the big vac hose around the little tool dust port and wrapping the connection with a lot of blue tape. It's a solution, but not a very efficient one. Rockler's new Dust Right Universal Small Port Hose Kit is designed to bridge this gap by offering a wide range of tool-to-vac compatibility.

The kit consists of a high-quality hose with a 2 1/4-inch OD port on one end that attaches to the vac. This is compatible with vacs from Festool, Shop Vac, Craftsman, and others (but not Ridgid, which requires a larger port). The Rockler kit also comes with two flexible rubber dust ports, (1 and 1 1/2-inch ID) that connect to the tool-end of the hose. These ports are rubbery and easily pliable, so they can also fit over a wide range of rectangular dust ports. They fit most of my power tools, but not all of them. The tiny

port on my Makita orbital sander, for example, was not compatible. On the other hand, the 1 1/4-inch port wrapped around my old Makita belt sander with a solid, though not perfect, fit. The dust bag of this tool is long gone and I had actually stopped using it because of that.

The ports each have a slight angle to them, which helps with managing the hose when the tool is being used. While connected to the hose, the two ports (and the port on the vac end) can spin freely to stop the hose from coiling while in use.

The hose is a high point: It's only about 3 feet long, but it can stretch to more than 13 feet. It stretches with light resistance, which takes a little getting used to. Also, the hose is heavier than other vac hoses. It's

very durable and didn't kink when it was accidentally stepped on a few times.

Unfortunately, the kit doesn't come with a carrying bag, which is not surprising considering that Rockler caters to the woodworking crowd and not the carpentry crowd. I'm planning on picking up a small duffel to hold the pieces.

At first I thought the \$40 price tag for this kit was high. But once I realized how nice the hose is and how well the system works, it seemed reasonable. Every element of this kit is thought out, from the durability of the hose to the free and easy swivel of the connections. It's going to solve a lot of problems on a jobsite (and save a lot of blue tape).

*Doug Mahoney is a carpenter in Harvard, Mass.*

