

Hitachi Cordless Framing Nailer

BY TIM UHLER

Editor's note: Hitachi recently announced that it will change its name to Metabo HPT beginning September 2018. Only the name will change; all warranties, model numbers, battery compatibilities, and so on will remain the same. See JLConline.com for more information.

We have pretty much gone cordless with power tools, but we haven't been able to with nailers. That being the case, is it worth owning a cordless nailer? I have previously reviewed gas-powered nailers from Bostitch and Paslode and battery-powered nailers from DeWalt. For the last few months, we've been using the new Hitachi brushless cordless framing nailer.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Unlike the Paslode, which has an internal combustion engine, and the DeWalt, which has a flywheel design, the Hitachi uses an "Air Spring Drive System." Air that is permanently sealed in the chamber is used to drive two to three nails per second, according to Hitachi. The recoil feels like that of a pneumatic Hitachi gun—minimal on my wrist.

There is no ramp-up time, and you can use the gun sequentially or in bump-fire mode. This gun is not what you'd want for nailing off sheathing or decking, but for most framing tasks, there's hardly any difference between this and most pneumatics.

The depth of drive (a dial-type tool-free design) works very well. The magazine holds only one full strip and has a dry-fire lockout. (You can fit one and a half sticks if you break sticks in half. I don't usually.)

The soft grip has a lock switch for safety, and the power switch shows the battery charge level and the selection for bump or sequential firing. The gun also comes with the world's largest rafter hook; it will actually hold the gun on a 3 1/2-inch wall or beam. This hook does swivel out of the way, but we think it's totally ridiculous. More on that below.

THE BEST TOENAILING AROUND

This gun shoots quickly and consistently. It has little recoil, and it's probably the best gun I've ever used when it comes to toenailing. It isn't light—the Paslode is better balanced and lighter—but it isn't super heavy, either.



A cordless nailer with the power of a pneumatic.

The brushless 18V nailer comes in two versions: One uses a 21° plastic strip (model NR1890DR) and the other, a 30° paper strip (NR189DC). The paper-strip model accepts clipped or offset round head nails. When equipped with a 3.0-Ah battery (shown), each model weighs a little over 10 pounds. Both nailers sell for around \$400 each. Kits include a charger, one 3.0-Ah battery, and a carrying case.

Photos by Tim Uhler

Weigh In!

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Good nose for toenailing. The nose design makes this nailer an excellent option for toenailing. The depth-of-drive dial is easily accessible, functions well, and is easy to follow while you're making adjustments.



All-inclusive power panel. Along with a safety switch (not shown) on the gun's handle, the tool also features an on/off power button. The onboard fuel gauge provides battery-charge status, and switching from bump-fire to sequential mode happens at the push of a button.

I like, too, that the 3.0-Ah battery charges pretty quickly—in less than 30 minutes—and that the batteries are cheap (normally around \$40, and cheaper if you watch for deals). You definitely need two batteries. Hitachi claims that the gun will shoot “up to 400 nails,” which works out to be 14 strips, on a charge. That isn't a lot. After about an hour of pickup framing, the battery was dead. We've had no trouble with two batteries, however. So far, batteries charge faster than we can typically drain one.

The gun has plenty of power and had no trouble driving framing nails into engineered wood. Often, on second floors, we toenail through LSL; this was no trouble. It has become my go-to gun when we are framing floors or ceilings. I also use it for blocking, because walking walls without a cord is safer and more convenient.

What I don't like. The gun is a little bulky. This isn't a deal breaker for me, but if you do a lot of overhead work, it'll give your shoulders a workout. Also, the right side of the gun where the motor is can block the line of sight.

Those things don't bother me too much but are worth noting. What does bother me and almost made this gun useless for me is the rafter hook. It is massive, and when I hooked the gun on my belt, it would swivel out when I didn't want it to. Hitachi then sent me the hook for its finish guns; that is the hook that should ship with it.

Affected by weather? Our climate is moderate but wet. I've used this gun soaked, with no trouble, in pouring rain. I did have some issues shooting hot-dipped galvanized nails, because they were thicker; I switched to Hitachi nails, and they work fine. I have seen on Instagram that the gun doesn't work well below 25°F. I asked Hitachi about this, and it said that the tool is equipped with thermal protection and is designed to shut off at 23°F. According to Hitachi, anything below 23°F can cause damage to the tool and shorten the life of the internal components.

THE BOTTOM LINE

This gun isn't intended for high-volume work, but it is perfect for nailing joists, blocking, pickup framing, ladder work, and the like. It would also be great for a remodeler who doesn't need to frame walls all day. It isn't a perfect gun, but Hitachi has advanced the cordless framing nailer to the point where I think every crew could benefit by having one.

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Two Double-Duty Ladders

BY CHRIS ERMIDES

First revealed at STAFDA about a year and a half ago, Werner's new 2-in-1 Dual Purpose Ladder became commercially available late summer 2017. This ladder converts from a stepladder to an extension ladder thanks to a special hinge and clips that lock it in position. It's available in 6-, 7-, and 8-foot stepladder versions that convert to 11-, 13-, and 15-foot extension ladders, respectively. Additional features include 3-inch-deep steps from bottom to top, oversized feet for added footing, and a padded V-rung when extended for working on things like wall corners, poles, or trees.

The Dual Purpose Ladder has a Type IA 300-pound duty rating, is made of fiberglass, and is ANSI A14.2 and OSHA certified. Once extended, the top rung of the stepladder meets with the bottom rung of the extension to create a 6-inch-deep platform. This ladder is not meant to be used as a double stepladder, though; it's not designed for you to climb both sides, or for two people to use at once.

OSHA regulations specifically state that because traditional stepladders are designed to be self-supporting, they should not be leaned directly against a vertical surface. In its closed position, the Dual Purpose ladder is not designed to be leaned up against a wall. However, Werner's Leansafe Ladder is a newly designed stepladder

that can be leaned against flat wall surfaces, wall corners, poles, and wall studs.

The Leansafe has a Type 1A duty rating and a load capacity of up to 300 pounds. It has large, non-marring rubber pads that Werner says maximize contact with the ground both in a standard setup and in leaning mode. The rear ladder rails, which are attached and hinged below the top platform, lock in place when closed and allow you to be closer to the vertical work surface. It also features rubber bumper pads, a magnet for holding metal tools or bits, and holes on the top to secure various tools.

The Dual Purpose ladder sells for \$192 (6 foot), \$219 (7 foot), and \$254 (8 foot). The Leansafe is available in 4-, 6-, 8-, 10-, and 12-foot options. Prices range from \$115 to \$370.

The ladders are available through various online retailers, including Home Depot (though as of now, not available in stores), as well as certain local distributors. Check Werner's site for availability. Expect a three-week lead time when ordering online.

Chris Ermides is the editor of Tools of the Trade. Follow him on Instagram @toolmagazine.



Stepladder and extension ladder all in one.

The Dual Purpose ladder can be safely used in either position. When extended, it features a 6-inch work platform on which you can firmly stand.



Lean safe. You likely use a stand ladder in this position all the time, though it is not OSHA-approved. Here, Werner has created a safer option—with wider feet and a dropped back rail for better contact to the wall.