

Three Levels of Awesome Toolbox

BY MARK CLEMENT

I've owned one version or another of the Craftsman 3-in-1 Rolling Workshop (model CMST18614) for a long time (similar versions are available under the Stanley FatMax and DeWalt brands). But regardless of the logo on the packaging, this toolbox is essential to my day-to-day deck building and other construction activities. It just works.

While you probably don't want to hire me to hip your rafters or perspire your pipes, perhaps the one true superpower I have is tool-storage domination. I know where my stuff is and don't have to spend much time looking for it; whether it's a caulk gun, a cat's paw, or other specialty tool, I know where to find it when I need it. This box, and how it's designed, is a big part of my success.

I try to store stuff in "categories," which is important when you are a remodeler and tasked with doing it all, all of the time: decks, bathrooms, demolition, painting (ack, yes, I paint), crown, and so on. I have colleagues who are skilled at plumbing or electric or whatever, and they have a "box" or "bucket" for trade-specific tools, too. But the problem with the box or bucket gambit is that it's just a pile, with sides. The Craftsman box, on the other hand, is a trilater, telescoping chest of drawers that undoes the pile mojo. With cubes, bins, and mobility, it's sublimely sized at 22-by-16-by-30-inches, including a steel roll-a-board-style handle, wheels, and drawer slides. All ruggedly built in the USA.

When I did design/build for television, I had a number of these toolboxes for my team of seven carpenters. We kept trim tools in one and framing gear in another; we even had a box for cordless equipment with holes drilled in the side for charger cords so we never needed to take the chargers out. I lined these boxes up centrally on site, so that nobody was wobbling around at midnight wondering where the narrow crown stapler and staples were. Boom. Go. Then we could easily put it all back, close them up, and roll.

Today, I have two rolling toolboxes. For my decks, which are built primarily of wood, I can store most of the tools I'll need in a single rolling toolbox. In the large bottom bin, I keep my cordless router, cordless circular saw, and cordless impact driver. In the center compartments, I keep screws, bits, and bit holders, an Allen wrench, gloves, phone charger, and other small items. The "toolbox top" (it has a tray) is deep enough to keep the chargers and batteries and back-up impact driver. And I roll all that stuff neatly to the site in one trip, not 80.

I also have a rolling box that I've kitted out for painting. Drop cloths, roller frames, and other big stuff all go below, while I put caulk tools, putty, and the like in the middle. In the top tray, I store brushes, brush combs, openers, putty knives, and other hand tools.

Loaded up with gear, these boxes can get pretty heavy, but fortunately they have a good set of side handles along with the wheels.

Rolling the boxes works well on level terrain, but when you need to hurl one into the truck or carry one upstairs, there's a place to grab hold. \$100. craftsman.com

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The Craftsman Rolling Workshop has a large lower bin that can hold circular saws and other power tools, a center tray with adjustable dividers for fasteners and hand tools, and an upper storage area for batteries, chargers, and other accessories. Integrated wheels make it easy to roll the toolbox around the job.

Photos: Mark Clement

Weigh In!

Want to test a new tool or share a tool-related testimonial, gripe, or technique? Contact us at jlctools@hanleywood.com.

A Cool Hard Hat

BY JEFF KIRBY

Having worn many hard hats over my 20-year career as a construction manager, I can say without hesitation that Ergodyne's Skullerz cap-style vented hard hat is my favorite. I've worked outdoors in all kinds of conditions, so I've experienced the scientific phenomenon created when you wear a hard hat in bright sunshine: a mini "hot box" sitting on top of your head. Anyone who has worn a hard hat is familiar with the uncomfortable result of exerting yourself when the sun is beating down. But I found that the sweat and elevated temperatures during the summer months are almost completely eliminated by the vented design of this hard hat, which prevents the temperature from rising in the small space above your head and under the lid.

The four-point suspension rig that comes with the hat is well thought out. You can adjust it from a hat size of 6 1/2 to 8, one-handed, while you wear it. The rig's moisture-wicking sweatband works great and keeps annoying sweat trickles out of your eyes. The hat also comes with a circular pad that sits on top of your head and prevents the annoying and sometimes painful pressure that strapping can cause.

The hat has a built-in slot for an LED headlamp. Because of the slot's location, the hat remains balanced on your head and doesn't become front-top heavy with the headlamp, as can happen with third-party clip-on after-market lights. It also includes slots for other accessories, like hearing protection and a chin strap. It is ANSI Type I Class C rated (construction and related trades).

I could find little to nothing with these helmets that I could be critical of. They feel light and comfortable, don't get hot, and adjust easily. Most importantly, they protect your noggin. At about \$45 each, these hard hats are probably a little more expensive than the ones you can get at the big box stores, but in my experience, the old cliché "you get what you pay for" applies here as well. I suspect that I will be wearing this particular piece of gear for the rest of my career and suggest that everyone who works in an occupation where hard hats are either required or recommended carefully consider wearing them as well. ergodyne.com

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The hats are available in both orange and white versions, which help with visibility (top). They feature an adjustable suspension system for ventilation, and can be worn backwards, which is not only stylish but also helpful when you are looking at things above you (center). Replacement suspension rigs, pads, sweatbands, and an LED headlamp that fits in the slot on the front of the helmet are available on the Ergodyne website (bottom).