

Things to Look For in a Pneumatic Nailer

Last month's column on air compressors drew many comments. Several suggested I was full of hot (compressed air.) But among the more civil inquiries came from L.W. of Nunda who wrote, "What should I look for in a pneumatic nailer?"



While I (usually) won't recommend specific brands because there are many good ones, I do have a thought or two about what makes some nailers better than others.

Foremost is ease of use. Some feel better in your hand than others, so handle several brands and get one that feels comfortable.

Another is accessibility of controls. Some nailers have depth setting up-front and easy to adjust; others are a pain. Make sure it loads nails easily, too. Some allow strips of nails to creep forward leaving one atop another. That's bad. Jams will follow and jams can be hard to clear. And before I forget it, disconnect your nailer from the compressor before adjusting settings or clearing jams. More than one careless woodworker has shot a nail into himself by failing to do just that.

The tip of a nailer (where brads exit the gun) should be covered with rubber or plastic; metal tips can mar the finish of a board. Be sure the gun won't fire unless the tip is fully depressed and remember to treat it like what it is – a gun. Read the instructions to determine the proper operating air pressure and wear safety glasses.

Bottom line: You won't go wrong with a nailer from any good manufacturer. I've always liked DeWalt products, but Porter-Cable, Milwaukee, Ryobi and others make good ones, too.

Finally, beginning woodworkers usually start off with a 16-gauge brad nailer and while they're fine for attaching molding to a bookcase, for example, even the longest 16-gauge brad (1.25 inch) is a little undersized for serious construction. To my way of thinking, an 18-gauge (one step larger) nailer is more versatile. Although the longest 18-gauge brad is only a quarter-inch longer than the biggest 16-gauger, it will hold much more tenaciously, and speaking of holding, try to put your brads where you want them. Once embedded in wood, they're almost impossible to remove.

It's none too early to begin dropping hints about a woodworking tool you'd like to find in your stocking come Christmas and a nailer might fit just about right.

Portable Heater Safety

ESFI offers the following safety tips and precautions regarding space heaters, baseboard and in-wall heaters as you head into cooler weather:

- Electric in-wall fan heaters should be cleaned a minimum of twice per year.
- Keep all furniture, draperies and other household objects at least three feet from the in-wall fan heaters and 12 inches from baseboard heaters. Keep portable space heaters at least three feet away from all flammable materials, such as furniture and draperies.
- Plug portable space heaters directly into the outlet; do not use an extension cord.
- If an in-wall or baseboard heater is shut off at the circuit breaker, be sure to lock or tag the circuit breaker to prevent someone from inadvertently turning it back on.
- If installing a new heater, read all information labels, follow all safety precautions and verify the electrical supply wires are rated high enough for the electrical demand of the heater.
- Some portable space heaters, electric in-wall fan heaters and baseboard heaters have been subject to product recalls. Check your brand and model number and visit www.cpsc.gov for possible information on your heater.

Kids' Corner Safety Poster

"Call before you dig!"



Kadon Leddy, 6 years old

Kadon is the son of Donnie and Krecia Leddy, Stockholm, S.D. They are members of Whetstone Valley Electric Cooperative, Milbank, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents.

Holiday Treats



Perky Popcorn

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| 12 cups popped popcorn | 2/3 cup sugar |
| 4 cups pretzels | 1/2 cup honey |
| 4 cups chocolate-covered
peanuts (or 2 cups peanuts
and 2 cups chocolate chips) | 1/2 cup light corn syrup
2/3 cup creamy peanut butter
1 tsp. vanilla |

Combine popcorn, pretzels and chocolate-covered peanuts in a large bowl. Combine sugar, honey and corn syrup in a heavy saucepan; bring to a full rolling boil, stirring constantly. Remove from heat; add peanut butter and vanilla. Mix until peanut butter is melted. Pour over popcorn mixture. Toss with two spoons to coat well. Spread on a waxed paper-lined cookie sheet. Cool and break into bite-sized pieces.

Mrs. Paul Smith, Kennebec
Cooperative Connections

Black Forest Torte

- 1 package chocolate cake mix
- 1 cup semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed milk
- 1 T. milk
- 1 (21 oz.) can cherry pie filling
- 1/2 tsp. almond extract

Preheat oven to 350°F. Prepare and bake cake mix as package directs for two 9-inch round layers. Remove from pans; cool thoroughly. In heavy saucepan, over medium heat, melt chocolate chips with sweetened condensed milk. Cook and stir until slightly thickened, about 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in milk. Cool 10 minutes. Combine cherry filling and almond extract. Place 1 cake layer on serving plate, top side up. With sharp knife, remove crust from top of cake layer to within 1/2 inch of edge; top with half the chocolate mixture, then the cherries. Top with second cake layer and remaining chocolate mixture.

Pictured, Cooperative Connections

Cream Puff Dessert

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| 1/2 cup butter or margarine | 3 cups milk, divided |
| 1 cup water | 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese,
softened |
| 1 cup flour | 1 (8 oz.) container whipped
topping |
| 4 eggs | 1/4 cup chocolate syrup |
| 3 small pkgs. instant vanilla
pudding | |

In a saucepan, bring butter and water to a boil; remove from heat. Add flour. Add eggs, one at a time, and beat as each one is added; mixture will form a ball. Pat in a lightly greased 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 400°F. for 35 minutes. Remove from oven and lightly press down with a spatula; cool. Mix together pudding and 2-3/4 cups milk. Beat together cream cheese and 1/4 cup milk. Combine pudding and cream cheese mixtures. Spread over cooled crust. Spread whipped topping over pudding and drizzle with chocolate syrup. Refrigerate.

Rita Huber, Bowdle
Cooperative Connections

Sensational Peppermint Patty Brownies

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| 3 cups sugar | 1 cup cocoa |
| 3 sticks butter or margarine | 1 tsp. baking soda |
| 1 T. vanilla | 1 tsp. salt |
| 5 eggs | 24 peppermint patties |
| 2 cups flour | |

In a large bowl, mix together sugar, butter and vanilla. Add eggs, beating until well blended. Stir in flour, cocoa, baking soda and salt. Pour half of batter into a greased 9x13-inch pan. Arrange patties in a single layer about 1/2-inch apart on batter. Spread remaining batter over all. Bake at 350°F. for 50 to 55 minutes.

Bridget Devlin, Sioux Falls
Cooperative Connections

Pecan Turtle Bars

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| 2 cups flour | 1 cup pecan halves |
| 1-1/2 cups brown sugar, divided | 1 cup chocolate chips |
| 1/2 cup and 2/3 cup butter,
softened | |

Combine flour, 1 cup brown sugar and 1/2 cup butter; mix well. Pat firmly into a 9x13-inch pan; sprinkle with pecans. In a saucepan over medium heat, cook 2/3 cup butter and 1/2 cup brown sugar, stirring constantly; boil 30 seconds to 1 minute. Pour evenly over crust. Bake at 350°F. for 18 to 22 minutes or until layer is bubbly. Remove from oven and immediately sprinkle chocolate chips over top. Allow to melt 2 to 3 minutes; swirl for marble effect. Cool.

Mary Jo Neisius, Parker
Cooperative Connections

Mound Bars

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| 2 cups graham cracker crumbs | 1 can sweetened condensed milk |
| 1/2 cup butter, melted | 1 T. peanut butter |
| 1/4 cup sugar | 1 pkg. chocolate chips |
| 7 oz. coconut | |

Combine graham cracker crumbs, butter and sugar; spread in a 9x13-inch pan. Bake at 350°F. for 10 minutes. Mix together coconut and milk; spread over baked crust. Bake an additional 15 minutes. Melt peanut butter and chips; spread over bars.

Nanetta Larson, Canton
Cooperative Connections

Please send your favorite favorite bread and breakfast recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in June 2007. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.