

# How to Select a Pneumatic Floor Nailer

For quite some time, hardwood floors have been installed with manual nailers. During the 1960s, however, a new breed of air-assisted tools emerged that eased the work of installers. These new tools required less effort to strike and offered great power to fit tight boards that were not always machined with precision. Today's milling technology offers very tight tolerances, and the increased presence of factory-finished floors has made installation more challenging due to beveled edges and the floor's finish both of which must be handled with care to prevent damage. This new trend has increased pressure on tool manufacturers to research and design new tools and accessories that will enhance the installers' confidence. Taking this into consideration, there are three main things you should look for when you select a pneumatic floor nailer: forgiveness, performance, and maintenance.



## **Forgiveness**

Stability and balance is better achieved with shorter tools that offer a wide base plate because they are less prone to tip over and damage your finished floor. They also allow for easier positioning over the board and increase the speed of displacement while dispersing the force of the mallet blow over a larger area. Look for plates that have contact with the boards' top edge because direct contact from the fastener ejection area with the edge could result in damage. In addition, look for a base plate that is grooved so dirt and particles will roll in instead of being dragged on the floor:



## **Performance**

Performance begins with design. Look for a nailer that

offers a low center of gravity as this will give you a better-balanced tool, resulting in easier positioning combined with faster displacement. Ergonomically shaped handles with a comfort grip will help relieve the stress your hands endure all day. Also, a shorter design, such as the Primatch P240 will get you closer to the end wall and significantly save you more time.

At the heart of all pneumatic flooring tools is the firing mechanism, which consist of a plunger valve and multiple seals. Most nailers utilize a valve that will open proportionally to the force exerted by the mallet blow. If the strike is too light, the fastener will remain high, while if it's too hard, the fastener could sink too deep and provoke fractures in the wood. Primatch's state-of-the-art compact firing valve offers smooth yet powerful, operation and will fully set the fastener independently of the striking force -even if activated with the hand. Also keep in mind low air consumption. New technology with hi-speed discharge valves requires less cubic feet per minute of free air to operate.

## **Maintenance**

While in the past all pneumatic flooring nailers required daily lubrication today the air tool industry offers oil-free designs. The new Primatch valve was designed to operate oil-free (although minimal lubrication will not affect its performance and will prolong longevity of seals). An oil-free design minimizes maintenance and avoids spilling of oil on surrounding surfaces. Some questions you should keep in mind include: When it's time to service the nailer, how difficult is it? Can it be done on the job site? Does it require special tools? For example, Primatch's air valve can be overhauled within minutes. Select a tool in which you

feel confident and one in which you will be able to service with ease. Lost time will cost you money! When selecting a pneumatic floor nailer, do not overlook the feeder magazine. It must be well attached to the structure or supported at its high end. If not, you should periodically check and secure those screws as they will loosen up due to vibration. Also keep in mind that all pneumatic tools are prone to jamming, so select a tool that offers simple and easy access to the jam. You will be back to work faster if it requires only two steps instead of eight.

### **Fasteners**

Two types of fasteners are available: nails (also called "cleats" or "spikes" which are offered in L or T configurations, and staples. Both perform well with pneumatic nailers because nailers cannot sense if round or blunt tips are being used. Blunt tip nails punch and cut their way through the fibers to stay on path, while round tip nails have a tendency to chase the grain, which could cause a fish hook if you use round tips, make sure there is a slight angle on the tip, which help directs the nail.

Today's flooring goes well beyond domestic oak with new dense and brittle species from around to world becoming readily available to flooring installers. We feel that a blunt tip is more efficient and forgiving for splitting wood. Plus, you can eliminate waste and save money by opting for a stick of nails that use a collation system that won't leave you with bits and pieces when the box is dropped or when you unload your tool.

### **Accessories**

Choosing a brand name nailer ensures you of multiple accessories for various tasks Primatech offers longer magazines (nails or staples) for large area applica-

tions, multiple adapter plates for various profiles and an array of mallets from aluminum to metal heads. Mallets are usually supplied with your nailer. Look for a long and grooved handle for better grip and non-marring white rubber cap. A new trend in the industry is wide base plates designed to install factory finished products. The concept is to rest and push against the tongue which eliminates contact with the edge. Primatech's TRAK-EDGE adapter plate also features a built-in tapping block with suspension to absorb the recoil effect and eliminate stress on the mounting hardware. Standard and custom models are available.

When selecting a pneumatic nailer, look beyond the tool and see the manufacturer's involvement in the industry. Such manufacturers can better guide you since they work closely with the flooring manufacturers to ensure that you will use the right equipment for your installation. Is the manufacturer dedicated to produce the very best? Are they leading the way to innovation? Are they knowledgeable about the flooring products? For performance, quality and total dedication to flooring excellence, you must be able to rely on genuine manufacturers. Make Primatech your first and best choice. ■



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