

Nails: More Important Than You Thought To The Bottom Line

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Nails, pretty boring stuff, simple commodity, right? Wrong. Not all nails are created equal. In fact, we can make the case that nail quality and the type of collated nails used effects worker productivity, and thus the all-important Bottom Line.

Inferior nails mean more nail jams, slowing down the worker, and tools wearing out prematurely, meaning tool downtime often when you can least afford it. Cheap nails also mean trouble with building inspectors who have been known to question the structural integrity of a house made with inferior nails. They often will "red-tag" such a building, making the workers re-nail everything with code-recognized nails.

The only sure way to know you've got high quality, code-recognized nails, and won't have the inspectors asking a lot of questions, is with the ICC-ES stamp on your nail boxes. Some manufacturers say their nails are "made to ASTM standards" and that may suffice, but having the ICC-ES stamp is better. To obtain the ICC-ES stamp, nail manufacturers not only have to meet ASTM standards, but they must also demonstrate that their manufacturing processes and materials meet the rigorous standards of ICC-Evaluation Services an independent third party evaluator and subsidiary of the International Code Council. Every box of nails with an ICC-ES stamp means that it has an ICC-ES evaluation report, which provides evidence that the nails comply with structural integrity code, and rest assured building inspectors like to see the ICC-ES stamp when they look at your nail boxes.

But even if you have high quality nails, the way the nails are delivered, that is, paper-tape, plastic or coil collated, can make just as big of a difference in worker productivity. The great match up here is paper-tape collated strip

nails versus plastic collated strip nails, these two make up more than 80 percent of the collated nail market.

Paper tape collated nails have a big productivity advantage over plastic. Extensive site visits by Paslode product engineers have demonstrated four areas where users have productivity problems with plastic collated nails:

- 1) Slowing the worker down - plastic means more frequent nail jams, and the constant need to clean up the plastic debris;
- 2) Safety issues - the plastic flies or shears off the nail as it is fired, and that plastic often hits the tool user in the face, slowing him or her down, if not sending them to the first aid station; plus all that debris on the jobsite is a slipping hazard.
- 3) High scrap rates - the plastic in a strip is purposely brittle so it will shear off, but that very brittleness means these strips break easily when dropped, and often the bottom of a box has many broken strips from the weight of the strips on top. Note: some manufacturers are now making the plastic less brittle to avoid the flying plastic issue, but this often means the plastic does not shear and gets stuck under the nail not allowing it to seat properly, and workers have to go back and hand nail.
- 4) More frequent tool maintenance - Plastic collated nails mean more frequent jams and dry fires because of the plastic not shearing off correctly. This creates premature wear and more frequent tool downtime.

Field studies also establish that paper tape nails don't have these problems. Framing nailers using paper tape nails jam at a significantly lower rate, increasing the speed of the worker. And there is no flying plastic to cause injuries, or constant need to clean up. Paper-tape nails don't break when dropped, so scrap rates are significantly lower and, because there are fewer jams and dry fires, wear and tear on the tool is greatly reduced meaning less down time for maintenance.

Few are probably aware that there is another advantage to using paper tape collated nails: they have better holding power. Before you collate a nail with paper you must clean it, and many manufacturers, including Paslode, add a proprietary polymer tip coating to the cleaned nail for easier penetration. A clean nail and a tip coating mean better holding strength because the heat generated by driving the nail helps bond the polymer coating to the wood. I've known many carpenters who complain that they have problems moving framing that is nailed with plastic collated nails because of the lack of bonding strength. This is because manufacturers don't clean the nails before putting them in the plastic collation and they are greasy or oily.

Paslode's expertise is manufacturing paper-tape collated nails for 30 degree framing nailers. These nails have a propriety tape adhesion so they don't fall apart in wet weather and a special process to make the paper very rigid, meaning they shear consistently when fired creating less jams and wear.

In addition to being paper tape collated, all of Paslode's framing nails are the patented RounDrive® nail, a true innovation in nails for 30 degree framing nailers. The RounDrive® nail meets all building code requirements of a round head nail, which, until these nails came along, could only be delivered by a 20 degree framing nailer.

In today's building environment, enhancing productivity and worker safety are very important. To overlook the quality of the nails you use and the way they are delivered can cost you more than the pennies you save by using inferior, no name nails.

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