

Sturdy Demolition Tool

by Greg DiBernardo

Deck Demon
Angel-Guard Products
800/325-4832
angelguardproducts.com
List price: \$119

When you're in the deck building business, you are also in the deck removing business, whether you like it or not. Nearly every project we do involves either completely demolishing an existing deck or removing deck boards and railings to resurface an existing frame. So over the years, we've tried a variety of deck-specific demolition tools for deck-board removal — some have worked great and others have been just plain useless. The Deck Demon falls in the first category.

In Action

Operation is simple: Rest the head of the tool on a single or double joist and apply pressure upward directly under the deck board's connection to the joist. The effort required to "pop" the board off depends on the type of decking being removed, its thickness, and the fasteners used to install it. For this review, we used the Deck Demon on three types of deck boards — nailed 5/4x6 treated southern yellow pine, screwed 2x6 treated southern yellow pine, and hidden-fastened (clips in grooves) PVC decking.

The Deck Demon worked well on all three decks. The nailed-down deck was the fastest to de-board and most of the nails came out with the board (though some nails pulled through the boards). It was slower going on the screwed-down deck because of the thickness of the 2x6 boards and the holding power of the screws. Some screws sheared off when pressure was applied, while others pulled



through the boards, depending on the extent of decay around the fastener. On the PVC deck, the boards easily popped out of the metal hidden-fastener clips. However, as with every other demo tool we've used, most of the clips remained attached to the joist and had to be removed after the fact.

Features

One of the things we really liked about the Deck Demon was its all-steel composition — including the handle. The construction is akin to a traditional crowbar, except for the welds that attach the head to the shaft. As a result, the shaft applies 100% of the power and leverage to the task at hand, instead of flexing. Barring a weld snapping, the Deck Demon seems nearly indestructible and should last a long time even under heavy use.

The tool has nail-puller slots on the tip of each prong, presumably for removing straggling nails and screws from joists. This feature works but is awkward to use because the handle is offset from the prying point. For this phase of the job, we have another tool that works faster.

Some of my crew wished that the handle were longer. An extra foot would let the

user remain more upright and gain even more leverage when popping boards. It is not a deal breaker, but a similar tool we use for de-boarding that has a longer handle is definitely more comfortable. On the other hand, the longer handle can make that tool tough to use in tight spaces.

The head on the Deck Demon is rigid, so prying can be done in only one direction. This means the operator is usually standing on joists filled with bent nails or screws, which isn't as fast or safe as working from existing deck boards. Sometimes, if the boards are easy to pop off the joists, you can work the tool backward and remain standing on the deck, but it is difficult to get significant leverage that way.

Because the Deck Demon works as advertised and is well-built, it's earned a place in our arsenal. It is relatively expensive for what it does compared with some of our other deck-board-removal tools. But if it lasts longer than those tools, most of which we've had to replace several times, it may eventually prove to be a better value. ❖

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