



Vinyl Siding the Right Way



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Page 122

Tools & Materials (continued)

Hand-held metal detectors

Wizard Metal Detectors, manufactured and distributed by Wizard Distribution Inc., www.wizarddetectors.com, (888) 346-3826, cost of Little Wizard: \$19.95; cost of Lumber Wizard: \$99.95

If you do renovation, restoration or any carpentry that involves dubious materials and would prefer to discover lurking foreign bodies in advance instead of with your sawblade, Wizard Distribution's battery-powered metal detectors can help. The company offers several styles; I tried the small and medium-size models. For starters, I asked a friend to shoot various-length 16-ga. finish nails into 1x4 and 2x4 scraps and to cover the stock with a couple of layers of masking tape. I then went fester-hunting by mapping the spots that set off alarms, pulling off the tape and comparing my drawings to the locations of the nail holes. It took me a few tries to figure out how to use the detectors: Detection was improved (a lot) when I held the scanner at



a slight angle and used it in the factory-recommended circular pattern, perhaps allowing the scanner to pick up more of the length of the nail rather than just the head.

Even with familiarity, using the Little Wizard is a deliberate affair. The sensor head is only about 3 in. wide, so thorough scanning requires multiple passes. In practice, you might need five minutes to check an 8-ft. wide board. The much larger Lumber Wizard is correspondingly more sensitive, speedy and expensive. To be fair,

I should note that both detectors were noticeably more effective in identifying larger potential shrapnel such as embedded 10d nails or drywall screws, although I did find all the little nails, eventually.

Should you buy one? The Little Wizard is pretty cheap insurance, and a premium sawblade is hard to find for much less than the seemingly pricey Lumber Wizard.

—Michael Standish builds and writes in West Roxbury, Massachusetts. Photo by Scott Phillips.