Battery-Powered Chainsaw Ideal For Light Work

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

The Oregon PowerNow 40V cordless electric chainsaw makes tree trimming and brush work a breeze. Pop in a battery, check the oil and start cutting. No fuel mixing, no pull cord, no stalled engine, and no hassle.

When the manufacturer offered to send one of their new chainsaws to FARM SHOW for testing, I jumped at the chance. The 14-in. bar model I received seemed almost too simple. The lithium ion battery pack charged up quickly. After adding chainsaw oil, I checked its level through the window. Once I inserted a battery pack, all I had to do was press the trigger release and pull the trigger. The cutting chain was at 6,400 rpm's immediately.

Once both battery packs were charged up, I headed for the woods. The company sent the standard battery pack with listed capacity of 1.25 Ah/47 Wh. They also included an endurance battery pack with a 2.4 Ah/89 Wh, nominal capacity. Both battery packs have a nifty charge check LED panel. Press a button, and one to four lights show how much charge remains.

At just 11.2 lbs. with the standard pack and 12.2 lbs. with the endurance pack, it's easy to reach up and prune branches. I sliced away a variety of smaller stems and branches, finishing up with a 5-in. dia. sapling. I ran through the standard battery's charge and swapped batteries, cutting more.

I quickly learned to not overload the saw. Make it work too hard by pushing down on a large cut, and the extra heat load can trip the thermal overload sensor. Let the saw pull itself through the wood, and that's not a problem.

The chainsaw is equipped with a PowerSharp built-in sharpener (see Vol. 35, No. 1) and I wanted to test it so I wasn't too careful about digging into the dirt or hitting an occasional stone. Once I noticed the saw not pulling itself through the wood, I engaged the PowerSharp. With the electric motor running full bore, I watched sparks fly for about 5 seconds, and the saw was back at optimum operation.

After more cutting, the electric motor ground to a halt. The second battery was dead. The nice thing is that if you have one last stem to cut or a little more cut to make to drop a sapling, wait a few minutes, and you'll get a final burst or two of cutting.

Two days later, I headed for the woods again with both packs charged. This time I was counting. Locating a downed poplar, I began limbing the tree with the standard battery pack. I made about 60 cuts of 2 to 6 in. in about 10 min. before the battery tuckered out. Switching to the endurance pack, I made 20, 6 to 10-in. diameter cuts before running out of juice. The company claims the endurance battery pack can cut up to 250 2 to 3-in. branches on a single charge.

How long the saw will cut on a battery pack depends on how sharp the cutting chain is and how hard the wood is. I wouldn't get this out when I was planning to cut up an oak tree for firewood. However, I would love to have it around for those quick trimming jobs that

There's no cord to pull or fuel to mix with this cordless electric chainsaw. All you do is pop in a battery and start cutting.

are easy to put off for lack of a fresh batch of mixed fuel. I've spent my time on ladders cutting limbs, and this would be a charm for such "less safe" jobs.

"For many homeowners, it could replace a gas saw entirely," says David Lofurno, Oregon PowerNow Tools. "For regular chainsaw users, it's an added tool for occasional work. However, one landscaper told me he hasn't used his gas chainsaw for months since getting the PowerNow."

There are downsides to the electric drive. If material is dragged back into the drive sprocket, the motor will stop. However, cleanout is quick. Just remember to pop the battery out for safety sake.

It's also important to have a clear bar when starting. While the torque is immediate once the motor starts, even a small stem against the chain can prevent start-up. The easy start could be a concern for anyone with children around. Keeping the batteries in a separate cupboard or shelf might be a good idea.

The manufacturer's suggested retail price for the saw kit with the standard battery pack is $399. With the endurance battery pack, the price jumps to $499. See the website or call the company for local retailers.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Blount, Inc., 4909 S.E. International Way, Portland, Ore. 97222 (ph 888 313-8665; www.oregonpowernowtools.com).

Lock-Down Device Stops Vehicle Theft

If you are concerned about vehicle theft, a Ravelco Anti-Theft Device (A-TD) may be the answer. The company claims no Ravelco-equipped vehicle has been stolen since the device was introduced in 1976! The device works so well that many insurance companies will offer a discount on comprehensive rates with installation.

The Ravelco A-TD consists of a 16-pin male plug on an armored steel cable. The cable runs from the under hood base unit to the operator cab. When the base unit is installed, two electronic circuits are connected through it. These vary from installation to installation, but can include the electronic fuel pump, ignition circuit, starter circuit or the on-board computer.

Each Ravelco plug is hand made and hard wired at their U.S. factory. No computer codes are involved.

Connections are made through the factory installed wiring harness and are virtually impossible to detect and difficult to trace. The combination of 16 alternative pins and two possible circuits creates more than 100,000 possible combinations. This eliminates the possibility of a master plug.

To start the vehicle or machine, the operator must first insert a matching 16-pin female plug in the male plug. Each installation kit comes with two female plugs, though extras can be ordered once identity of the owner is established at Ravelco. When exiting the vehicle, removing the female plug and attaching it to your keychain is all that is needed to "lock up" the vehicle.

Ravelco A-TD's can only be installed by approved dealers. If there are none in your area, the company will work with your local dealer on installation. Manufacturer's suggested retail price installed is $469.95 for cars and light trucks. Heavy-duty trucks, semis and heavy equipment A-TD's are priced at $499.99. Extra plugs are $30 each.

If no local dealer is available, units can be ordered direct from Ravelco for $269.95.

To start the vehicle, operator must first insert a matching 16-pin female plug into a male plug.

Installation at a non-certified dealer generally takes two hours and runs $100 to $200 depending on rates. No special tools are needed.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Ravelco, 6920 Oak Knoll Drive, Richmond, Texas 77406 (ph 281 341-6222; help-info@ravelco.com; www.ravelco.com).

Photo shows Anti-Theft Device installed on a Deere tractor.

Winch-Controlled Snow Blade

"My son Doug and I used an old junked-out water heater to make a snow blade for our ATV," says Jeff Kumpf, Hopedale, Ill.

The snow blade is raised and lowered by an electric winch that's operated by the ATV's 12-volt battery. The winch hooks up directly to the back part of the blade. An angle iron frame supports the plow and pins onto the ATV's frame.

"The winch controller sits directly between my legs, which makes it easy to adjust the blade up or down," says Kumpf. "It's really easy to operate and works better than a pickup-mounted blade because it allows me to work in small areas where a pickup can't go," says Jeff. "I enjoyed building it because my son and I were able to spend some great quality time together in the shop on some blistery days."

He cut the water heater's internal tank down along the vertical weld. Then he measured around the tank to the halfway mark and made a cut there, which resulted in two identically curved pieces. He welded one piece inside the other, which resulted in an almost 1/4-in. thick blade. Then he built the support mechanism that connects the blade to the 4-wheeler. The 4-wheeler had no type of mounting assembly on the undercarriage, so he welded 4 lengths of 1-hole steel strap straight down off the structure. He welded together 2 long struts that straddle the welded-on straps and pin onto them.

The next step was to mount a cutting edge – a 1 by 1-in. length of angle iron – onto the blade. "The cutting edge allows the blade to run just across the top of any hard surface, such as concrete," says Jeff.

The blade pivots up or down on a pair of rubber wheels that attach to the frame. "When

Snow blade is raised and lowered by an electric winch that's operated by ATV's 12-volt battery.

clearing a gravel driveway the wheels allow the unit to ride up slightly without catching on rocks," says Jeff.

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