

THE TRUTH ABOUT POWDER ACTUATED TOOLS

- Fact #1** Powder Actuated Tools are not firearms or weapons ... they are designed and operate as construction tools
- Fact #2** Powder Actuated Tools are not “nail guns”
- Fact #3** Powder Actuated fasteners are not common nails

You may have heard that powder actuated tools (“PAT”) are firearms or “nail guns.” Hollywood likes to suggest that PAT can be used like “guns.” Along with those myths some people believe that PAT fasteners are common nails. Here’s the truth:

Powder actuated tools are occasionally mis-characterized as a firearm or a “nail gun” because people are confused about how a powder actuated tool operates. While these tools have a firing pin and commonly use a blank gun powder charge, the fastening is fully contained, i.e there are no projectiles or bullets, and the tool cannot be discharged like a firearm. It’s important to break down the powder actuated fastening system to understand both the tool and the fastening.

The Tool - A powder actuated tool must be perpendicularly pressed against a hard surface (like concrete or steel) with a force on the surface of at least 5 pounds (22N) greater than the weight of the tool before it will discharge.¹ ***These tools will not discharge by merely pulling the trigger (as if it were a firearm).***

Power Source - ***The power source for a powder actuated tool fastening system is a blank cartridge without a projectile or bullet.***

Fasteners – ***The fasteners used in powder actuated tools are NOT common nails.*** They are manufactured from special steel and heat-treated to produce a very hard yet ductile fastener. Those properties are necessary for the fastener to penetrate concrete or steel without breaking.

It’s also important to know that state laws typically EXCLUDE powder actuated tools from the legal definition of a weapon. See for example: Arizona Revised Statutes §13-3101.8(b)(ii)² While we do not have a data base of all 50 state laws governing firearms, we are not aware of any state that either defines powder actuated tools as a weapon or enforces state firearms laws on industrial tools such as PAT. Thus, the suggestion that states or law enforcement treat powder actuated tools as firearms/weapons is not true.

As an industrial/construction tool, powder actuated tools are governed by federal OSHA regulations.

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¹ See ANSI A10.3 §4.1.1.2 and §4.1.1.3

² <http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/13/03101.htm&Title=13&DocType=ARS>