

•Toolbox

**Pro Pac Tool Bag
by Dave Holbrook**

If I'm in a hardware store, chances are I'll check out the toolboxes. I keep hoping someone will come out with a box that'll solve my chief gripes: Dents, distortion, and flimsy latches make closing metal boxes a pain. Drop-in trays always seem to have a hole under the handle that allows small tools to spill over into the bottomless pit below. In the bottomless pit itself, tools become entangled and you have to rummage through them to find the one you need. And sorting trays automatically unsort when the toolbox bumps around in the back of the truck. Periodically, I empty the whole mess onto the floor to cull out the duplicate and triplicate screwdrivers, nailsets, flatbars, and other items I thought were gone for good and therefore replaced.

The Veto Pro Pac XL (vertical tool orientation protected and packed) comes as close to an ideal solution as anything is likely to. Not a box but a bag, the body of the XL is made from Denier 1800 nylon, which is where its similarity to a gatemouth bag or a

bucket insert begins and ends. Frankly, it smokes them both, and every box I've seen.

On the outside, the XL resembles a classy piece of carry-on luggage, featuring an integral, comfortable grip that extends through the bag to the base, separating the two sides into independent compartments. The grip is deliberately designed to flex along the top of the bag, preventing fatigue breakage and actually improving carrying comfort. Four flat zipper pockets and four D rings, as well as a detachable, padded shoulder strap, are the only features on the bag's exterior.

Its streamlined, spill-proof design includes no latches; instead, heavy, smooth-acting two-way zippers open the bag on each side, down to the waterproof polypropylene tray that forms its base. When a side is opened, its zippered flap can be folded and snapped onto itself, in two successively lowered positions, to keep it from flapping in the breeze.

The interior is neatly detailed with 30 substantial pockets of varying widths and depths and 32 little pockets for punches, small drivers, bits, and such. Backing the pockets, the center panel is lined with a stiff, smooth polypropylene panel to prevent gouging or tearing by pointed or edge tools. In front of the pockets is the bottom

tray area, affording space for hammers, bars, tape, chalk line, speed square, and more. There are also two flat, zippered interior compartments for storing small parts like wire nuts, straight rulers, and I don't know what all.

I transferred at least one of everything from my former favorite, a 22-inch Rubbermaid toolbox, and had room for all with space to spare. The only tool the XL wouldn't accommodate was my Estwing flatbar, which is too long by a couple of inches. The XL's effective storage area measures 16 1/2 inches wide, 15 1/2 inches high, and 9 1/2 inches deep empty. Soft sides allow you to stuff it fuller than you're likely to need.

Amazingly, the vertical storage not only puts everything right where you can see it, but also keeps it there. Challenged to do so by its maker, Roger Brouard, a 20-year veteran carpenter, I zipped up the bag and tossed it across my garage. Nothing spilled or even moved out of place (okay, a couple of nailsets rose slightly in their pockets). Bag tossing isn't a typical application, but it's a jaw-dropping demo I'm likely to show off again.

Empty, the bag weighs a healthy eight pounds. That may seem like a penalty surcharge, but consider it mute testimony to its heavy-duty construction. Fully loaded, it's comfortable to carry and easy to store, even behind the front seat of a pickup.

The XL bag debuted in September 2002, to be followed by two other models, the L-C (large compact), a 12 1/2-inch-wide, 13-inch-high, 9 1/2-inch-deep technician's bag, and the XXL-F, a framer's bag measuring 25x13x9 1/2 inches.

For this tool, I'm putting my money where my mouth is; \$120 seems like a reasonable sum to pay. And I'm not even in the field anymore.

Veto Pro Pac
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The Pro Pac's unique vertical organization makes tools easy to find without rummaging and keeps everything in its place, even when the bag is tossed around. The sturdy bag has room and pockets for all your hand tools, as well as a comfortable strap for long hikes from the truck.

