

Marin Custom Metal Works and the EZ-POT PRO

Most of the manufacturers that produce goods, services and tools for slate roofing and other traditional roofing trades are located on the eastern seaboard. Not Marin Custom Metal Works (MCMW), which is nestled amid the rolling hills of northern California just north of San Francisco. MCMW is the home of the popular EZ-Pot Pro, a portable “bench furnace” type soldering iron heater that can be carried up on the roof and kept at one’s fingertips.



Inventor Kevin McConnell (above) has been in the custom metal trades for 36 years. He opened his own shop in 1996 and works by himself. He says, “I never thought twice about the clunky old firepots used for heating our soldering coppers. At present, nearly all residential and most commercial sheet metal workers who do quality work solder their work. Nearly all are still using the old propane firepots to heat their soldering coppers, just like the journeymen that they served their apprenticeship under, and, just as those journeymen, in turn, learned from the guys they had learned from, and so on, back about 50 years.”

The old propane firepots, according to Kevin, “were not designed to heat soldering coppers, but were intended for plumbers to melt lead with which to seal the joints of cast iron waste lines. They are highly inefficient, sending about 90% of the produced heat into the air, and sending out a lot of pollutants in the process. In addition, they are highly affected by even the slightest breezes, causing the workers to cease their soldering when the wind comes up. The EZ-Pot Pro addresses and solves all of these problems while heating faster and more efficiently.”

An old propane firepot is a



real handful to carry up ladders, weighing around 32 pounds with a full tank. The EZ-Pot Pro weighs in at almost exactly five pounds.

“Why drag an old fire pot with a five gallon propane tank on a roof? Because you need your soldering irons nearby, hot, and enough gas for the job, right? That’s why I invented the Ez-Pot Pro System,” Kevin tells us, “a lightweight portable fire pot made to be used on a roof. No more jury-rigged five gallon propane bottle bracing, just a 14 ounce bottle will last 8 hours.”

Setup is quick and the device can be adjusted to any pitch from zero to 12/12 (45 degrees) in about 2 seconds. A 5 gallon propane tank is round and cumbersome, very difficult to wrestle around, and especially difficult to stabilize on pitched roofs, which is not good for something with an open flame on a bare wood roof sheeting, and typically with several piles of construction debris as a landing site when it rolls off the roof. The EZ-Pot Pro is stable and has an anchor cable system that can be nailed to the roof. It is also small enough to fit in a large shoebox. It can be easily stored and locked in a toolbox, making it unnecessary to chain and lock it in the back of a pickup truck or bring it into the shop at night, as is the common practice with the old firepots.

The device, enclosed on five sides for wind protection and made in the USA, is made from 1/8” aluminum 4”X4” square tubing cut to length on a chop saw. It has an insulated stainless steel inner liner and an aluminum adjustable base. Marin Custom Metal Works, in business since 1972, makes everything except the quick release fittings and the torches. The EZPot Pro is five inches high, seven inches wide, thirteen inches deep, and has the capacity to hold two 3 LB soldering irons. It has a continuous runtime of usually more than eight hours using a fully charged 14 ounce propane bottle. It comes equipped with a Goss GP-360L torch that has a swivel igniter tip and a brass regulator. It produces 6,000 BTUs @ 40 psi. The torch attaches to one pound disposable propane containers.

A video showing this tool in use is available at SlateRoofWarehouse.com where a similar tool can be bought (call 814-786-9085 9-5, M-F, eastern time).



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