

# This upstart Yorktown business is trying to protect your fingers when you swing a hammer

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Safety Nailer enables users to hold a nail in place with a smaller risk of striking a finger. (WYDaily/ Courtesy Safety Nailer)

A piece of plastic designed and sold by Yorktown entrepreneurs could save you a bruise next time you're hanging a photo on the wall.

Safety Nailer is a plastic product that straps to a users' forefinger and thumb, allowing them to hold nails or screws in place as they are driven into position.

The business is owned by Yorktown couple Kristen and Daniel Eifes. Daniel Eifes, 35, said he came up with the design in 2012 and secured a patent for the device, which is meant to shield digits from the brunt impact of a hammer and ensure more of the force is applied to the nail.

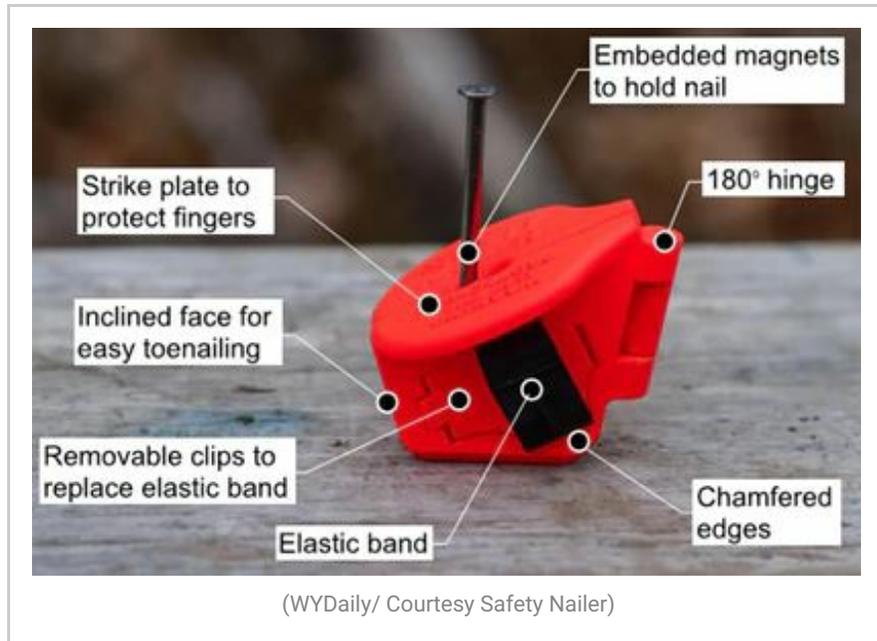
"It protects your fingers and prevents throwing money out the window by bending nails," Kristen Eifes, 33, said.

Daniel Eifes was medically discharged from the Navy the same year he patented Safety Nailer. His friend from his college days at Old Dominion University and engineer Drew Zirkle stepped in to help bring his designs into production.

"Let's go into business together and get it rolling," Kristen Eifes recalled. "The two of us have made the business kickstart."

They launched the product on Kickstarter.com in April, and raised more than \$8,600 as they produced Safety Nailer in a custom mold in their basement.

Since launching, they've sold about \$25,000 in products. Safety Nailer sells for \$9.99 on their website and is also available on Amazon, as they've moved on from their basement and partnered with a larger manufacturer.



Their early success has caught the eyes of investors. The Eifes and Zirkle received \$5,000 last weekend through the Start Peninsula competition for entrepreneurs and inventors, according to a James City County news release.

The team was one of 30 who entered the competition and one of just 10 selected to move on to the final round, where they took five minutes to pitch their products to a panel of judges made of regional business leaders. Another five minutes was dedicated to answering the judge's questions.

"Well, we were always nervous," Eifes said. "There was a bunch of great products there. Figured it's worth a shot. If we made it, great. If not, we didn't lose anything."

Safety Nailer was one of just three teams to take home the \$5,000 prize.

Start Peninsula is hosted by the City of Newport News with the intention of stimulating entrepreneurial growth. Before the event, she said all of their funding had been out of their pockets or through the Kickstarter campaign.

Kristen Eifes said their prize money will go toward launching their second product line: the Safety Nailer Mini. The original Safety Nailer is intended for screws and nails longer than half an inch, and the mini will work with those shorter than that.

The mini will hit the market in the spring, Kristen Eifes said, adding they would've had to again launch a Kickstarter campaign if not for the Start Peninsula funding.

She said she is a full-time civilian employee at Fort Eustis, and Safety Nailer is a second full-time job. She's also a mother, and said she has learned to multitask since launching her husband's invention.

The community support has been vital to their success, both because of their product's early popularity and her husband's status as a disabled veteran.

"It seems like everybody loves the fact that it's a disabled-owned business and a woman-owned business, so the two mixed together... We've had so many compliments," Kristen Eifes said.

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