

## Fastenal Company (FAST)

**\$34.54** (As of 04/14/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$36.00**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

**Zacks Recommendation:**
**Neutral**

(Since: 04/17/19)

Prior Recommendation: Outperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

**Zacks Rank:** (1-5)

**4-Sell**

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:C

Value: F

Growth: A

Momentum: B

## Summary

Fastenal reported first-quarter 2020 results, wherein the top and bottom lines topped analysts' expectations by 0.2% and 2.9%, respectively, despite continued slower activity levels. As strong SG&A leverage offset weaker gross margins, earnings and revenues also grew year over year. March sales were not as bad as expected, as strong safety/government product sales offset weakness in other products/end markets. Fastenal's shares have outperformed the industry year to date. However, unfavorable product and customer mix continues to impact its margins. Gross and operating margins contracted 110 basis points (bps) and 10 bps year over year in the quarter. It also expects lower gross margin in the near term as product mix has shifted abruptly toward lower-margin government/safety products from higher-margin manufacturing/fasteners.

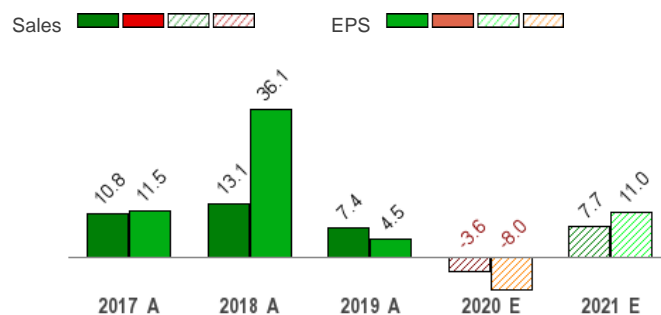
## Price, Consensus & Surprise



## Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$39.31 - \$26.72
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	6,440,447
Market Cap	\$19.8 B
YTD Price Change	-6.5%
Beta	1.15
Dividend / Div Yld	\$1.00 / 2.9%
Industry	<a href="#">Building Products - Retail</a>
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 30% (177 out of 253)

## Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	2.9%
Last Sales Surprise	0.2%
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-11.9%
Expected Report Date	07/09/2020
Earnings ESP	-4.4%

## Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	1,455 E	1,528 E	1,494 E	1,419 E	5,540 E
2020	1,367 A	1,229 E	1,281 E	1,266 E	5,142 E
2019	1,309 A	1,368 A	1,379 A	1,277 A	5,334 A

## EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2021	\$0.36 E	\$0.37 E	\$0.38 E	\$0.34 E	\$1.41 E
2020	\$0.35 A	\$0.28 E	\$0.31 E	\$0.31 E	\$1.27 E
2019	\$0.34 A	\$0.36 A	\$0.37 A	\$0.31 A	\$1.38 A

\*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	24.9
P/E F1	27.2
PEG F1	1.7
P/S TTM	3.7

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 04/14/2020. The reports text is as of 04/15/2020.

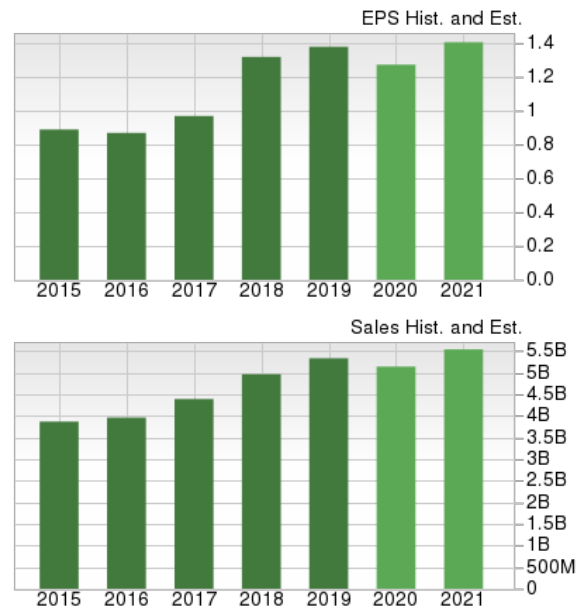
## Overview

Based in Winona, MN, **Fastenal Company** is a national wholesale distributor of industrial and construction supplies. The company distributes its products through more than 3,000 company-owned stores mostly located in North America.

Fastenal derives sales from the fastener product line and the other product line. The fastener product line comprises two kinds of products, threaded fasteners, and miscellaneous industrial and construction supplies and hardware. Threaded fasteners include products like bolts, nuts, screws, studs and related washers, while miscellaneous industrial and construction supplies and hardware include various pins and machinery keys, concrete anchors, metal framing systems, wire rope, strut, rivets and related accessories. Threaded fasteners are used in most manufactured products and building projects, and for the maintenance and repair of machines and structures.

The other product line includes tools, cutting tools, material handling, janitorial, electrical, safety and welding supplies and many more. Non-fastener products now represent nearly 66.4% of the company's daily sales.

Fastenal mainly serves customers in the manufacturing and non-residential construction markets. In the manufacturing market, its customers include original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and maintenance and repair operations (MRO), while in the non-residential construction market it serves general, electrical, plumbing, sheet metal and road contractors.



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## Reasons To Buy:

▲ **FAST Solutions is Revolutionary:** Fastenal has adopted FAST Solutions, an industrial vending process that has the potential to revolutionize the industrial distribution system and increase profitability. The company installs vending machines at the customer's location and keeps it filled with products they need. These vending machines inform customers what they are using and how they are using these products, which subsequently results in controlling the customer's inventory and administrative cost while reducing product consumption. Particularly, the non-fastener product line has benefited significantly from initiatives pertaining to industrial vending.

Fastenal's aggressive investment to increase Onsite locations, vending machines count and ecommerce business is expected to boost sales

Industrial vending is one of the primary growth drivers for Fastenal and has the potential to significantly increase sales and profits. Sales through vending machines grew at or near a double-digit pace in both 2017 and 2018. Sales through vending devices continued to grow at a double-digit pace in 2019, primarily due to higher installed base.

As of Mar 31, 2020, Fastenal operated 92,124 vending machines, up 10.4% year over year.

▲ **Onsite Locations:** In order to serve customers better, Fastenal provides Onsite location, in which a mini-Fastenal shop is basically located in the plant of a customer. The company signed 336 new Onsite locations in 2018 compared with 270 signings in 2017, reflecting an increase of 24.4%.

Fastenal had signed 362 new Onsite locations during 2019 and 79 in fourth-quarter 2019, up from 336 signed in 2018 and 67 in fourth-quarter 2018. As of Mar 31, 2020, the company had 1,179 active sites, up 24.8% from the comparable year-ago period. The increased number of onsite locations is likely to expand Fastenal's market share.

Total end-market locations in 2019 were 3,228 compared with 3,121 in 2018. It closed/converted 36 locations, including traditional branches in 2019, and 26 Onsites in fourth-quarter 2019 to cut down on unhealthy businesses.

▲ **Cost-Control Efforts & Diversification Beyond Fasteners:** Fastenal is actively seeking to control costs to offset cost inflation due to tariffs and rising freight expenses. The strategies for the same include automating warehouses, increasing delivery efficiency through its trucking network, and selling more private-level products with higher margins. This will aid the company to improve efficiency level, thereby increasing returns.

Markedly, the company has gradually expanded from a fastener distributor to a full-line industrial supplier. It has expanded its product lines to include an internal manufacturing division, government sales, Internet sales, metalworking and industrial vending. Fastenal has also built a national accounts team, which is dedicated to servicing corporate customers. These initiatives are gaining traction and will help to achieve future profitability.

In fourth-quarter 2019, daily sales to national account customers (representing 54.8% of total revenues) had increased 8.2% on a year-over-year basis. E-commerce sales grew 32% in 2019, including 35% increase from national account customers. E-commerce sales grew 27% in the first quarter of 2020, benefiting from promotions of its services/products.

▲ **Driving Investors Value:** Fastenal has been driving investor value by providing regular dividends. The company began paying annual dividends in 1991 and semi-annual dividends in 2003, and then expanded to quarterly dividends in 2011.

The company had paid nearly \$500 million dividends in 2019. Notably, it increased first-quarter 2020 dividend by 13.6% to 25 cents. This dividend was paid in cash on Feb 28, 2020 to shareholders of record at the close of business on Jan 31, 2020. The company keeps on raising quarterly dividends on a regular basis. Fastenal repurchased \$52 million of its common stock in the first quarter of 2020. This marked its first share repurchase since fourth-quarter 2018.

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## Reasons To Sell:

▼ **Margins Under Pressure:** Negative customer/product mix as a result of enhanced growth of lower-margin national accounts and lower proportion of higher margin fasteners have been the dampeners for Fastenal's gross margin since the past three years. The customer mix shifted toward the large-account end-market, which produces low-margin gross profit but stronger operating income. The product mix shifted from high-margin fastener products to lower margin non-fastener products.

Unfavorable product mix, pricing and competitive pressures are hurting gross margins

Gross margin in 2017 and 2018 had contracted 30 bps and 100 bps, respectively. Adding to the woes, Fastenal ended 2019 with a gross margin of 47.2%, down 110 bps from the year-ago level, mainly due to lower daily sales, price/cost deficit and higher freight expense. Operating margin also contracted 30 bps from the year-ago period due to the above-mentioned headwinds, despite undertaking various cost-cutting initiatives. In first-quarter 2020, the company's gross and operating margin contracted 110 bps and 10 bps, respectively, due to changes in product and customer mix, and deleveraging of fixed costs.

The coronavirus pandemic has caused shutdown of many companies' production units, retail stores and infrastructure activities. Fastenal is considered as "critical infrastructure" due to its presence with state/local governments, first responders, food processors, etc., and its supply chain capabilities. However, as the product mix has shifted abruptly toward lower margin government/safety products from higher margin manufacturing/fasteners, the company expects to temporarily experience sharply lower gross margin in the near term. Shipping costs have been rising and the supply chain has become less efficient, as Fastenal has identified non-traditional sources of supply.

▼ **Slowing Demand, Weakened Freight Revenues:** Slower end-market activity level throughout the business has been the primary cause of concern for Fastenal over the last few quarters. The company's daily sales growth was recorded at 2.8%, lower than 12.2% and 3.7% increase registered in the first and fourth quarters of 2019, respectively, as end-market activity continued to slow down in the quarter.

On a monthly basis, daily sales growth was 3.6%, 4.7% and 0.2% in January, February and March compared with 13.3%, 10.5% and 12.7%, respectively, in the comparable months of the prior year.

With weakening of activity and focus on supplying key products, Fastenal remains uncertain about its 2020 signing goals for Onsites (375-400) and vending (22k-24k). Hence, the company did not provide signing ranges at first-quarter 2020 earnings call.

In addition to slower demand in end-markets served, Fastenal is experiencing lower freight revenues due to deleveraging of a freight network. In fourth-quarter 2019, freight sales fell 7.5%, which resulted in less absorption of fleet costs.

While the company is making progress to mitigate its persisting weakness, the ongoing U.S.-China trade negotiations remain a significant headwind.

▼ **Stiff Competition:** The industrial, construction, and maintenance supply industry, still remains a large, fragmented industry that is highly competitive. Fastenal faces increased competition from brick and mortar retailers or from online retailers (particularly major internet providers who can offer a wide range of products and rapid delivery). This could cause Fastenal to lose market share, reduce the prices or increase spending, thus eroding operating income.

▼ **Overvalued Compared to Peers:** The company's stretched valuation is another major concern. Its trailing 12-month price to earnings ratio is 25.03, which is higher than the industry's 19.33. This implies that the stock is overvalued than its peers.

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## Last Earnings Report

### Fastenal (FAST) Q1 Earnings and Revenues Beat Estimates

Fastenal Company's top and bottom lines in first-quarter 2020 topped the respective Zacks Consensus Estimate despite continued slower activity levels. Moreover, activity levels weakened significantly in the second half of March, in response to societal actions that were undertaken to address the coronavirus pandemic.

#### Earnings & Sales in Detail

The company reported earnings of 35 cents per share, which beat the consensus mark of 34 cents by 2.9%. The reported figure also increased from the year-ago profit level of 34 cents per share.

Net sales during the reported period were \$1,367 million, beating the consensus mark of \$1,364 million by 0.2% and increasing 4.4% from the year-ago figure of \$1,309.3 million. The growth was driven by higher unit sales, primarily related to growth drivers, with notable contributions from industrial vending and Onsite locations. Also, higher sales of certain products later in the quarter related to the coronavirus pandemic also contributed to the increase.

It reported daily sales growth of 2.8%, lower than 12.2% and 3.7% increase registered in the first and fourth quarters of 2019, respectively, as end-market activity continued to slow down in the quarter.

On a monthly basis, daily sales improved 3.6%, 4.7% and 0.2% in January, February and March compared with 13.3%, 10.5% and 12.7%, respectively, in the comparable months of the prior year.

Notably, 50% of the business relates to fastener and safety products. Together, these two product lines grew 4.3% on a daily basis in the quarter.

Daily sales of Fastener products (mainly used for industrial production and accounting for 32.9% of first-quarter sales) declined 2.6% year over year. Sales of safety products (accounting for 19.8% of first-quarter sales) grew 18.4% on a daily basis. Sales of remaining products (accounting for 47.3% of first-quarter sales) grew 1.6% on a daily basis.

In addition, the company's manufacturing and non-residential construction end markets were down 1.1% and 7.8% on a daily basis, respectively, in the quarter. Nonetheless, the government business was up 31.1% on a daily basis. Moreover, sales to healthcare organizations more than doubled during the quarter.

#### Vending Trends and Other Growth Drivers

As of Mar 31, 2020, Fastenal operated 92,124 vending machines, up 10.4% year over year. During the quarter, the company signed 4,798 machine contracts, down from 5,603 reported in the year-ago period.

Fastenal signed 85 new Onsite locations during first-quarter 2020. The metric was 105 in first-quarter 2019. As of Mar 31, 2020, the company had 1,179 active sites, up 24.8% from the comparable year-ago period. Daily sales to national account customers (representing 55.4% of total revenues) increased 5.5% on a year-over-year basis during the quarter.

#### Margins Hurt by Higher Costs

Gross margin of 46.6% in the quarter contracted 110 basis points (bps) from the prior-year period due to changes in product and customer mix, and freight.

Also, operating margin contracted 10 bps year over year to 19.9% in the quarter, owing to lower gross margin.

Operating and administrative expenses (including gains from sales of property and equipment) — as a percentage of net sales — improved 110 bps year over year to 26.7% in first-quarter 2020, owing to the company's ability to leverage employee, occupancy, and general corporate expenses.

#### Financials

Cash and cash equivalents were \$160.7 million as of Mar 31, 2020, down from \$174.9 million on Dec 31, 2019. Long-term debt at the end of the quarter was \$450.1 million, up from \$342 million at 2019-end.

In the first quarter, cash provided by operating activities totaled \$241.1 million, up from \$204.9 million in the comparable year-ago period.

Quarter Ending **03/2020**

Report Date	<b>Apr 14, 2020</b>
Sales Surprise	<b>0.20%</b>
EPS Surprise	<b>2.94%</b>
Quarterly EPS	<b>0.35</b>
Annual EPS (TTM)	<b>1.39</b>

## Valuation

Fastenal shares are down 6.6% in the year-to-date period but up 0.6% over the trailing 12 months. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and the Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are down 9.3% and 5.2% in the year-to-date period, respectively. Over the past year, the Zacks sub-industry has declined 4.8% but the sector is up 0.4%.

The S&P 500 index is down 14.5% in the year-to-date period and 5.5% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 23.41x forward 12-month earnings, which compares with 18.8x for the Zacks sub-industry, 26.97x for the Zacks sector and 18.03x for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 28.37x and as low as 17.72x, with a 5-year median of 22.12x. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$36 price target reflects 24.32x forward 12-month earnings.

The table below shows summary valuation data for FAST.

Valuation Multiples - FAST					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/E F12M	Current	23.41	18.8	26.97	18.03
	5-Year High	28.37	21.5	26.97	19.34
	5-Year Low	17.72	16.02	19.06	15.19
	5-Year Median	22.12	18.9	23.16	17.45
P/S F12M	Current	3.44	1.31	0.99	3.04
	5-Year High	3.99	1.51	1.11	3.44
	5-Year Low	2.5	1.06	0.8	2.54
	5-Year Median	3.11	1.27	0.93	3.01
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	16.88	10.91	15.11	10.07
	5-Year High	18.93	12.89	16.31	12.87
	5-Year Low	11.38	8.46	10.89	8.27
	5-Year Median	14.93	10.77	12.53	10.78

As of 04/14/2020

## Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 30% (177 out of 253)



## Top Peers

GMS Inc. (GMS)	Outperform
HD Supply Holdings, Inc. (HDS)	Neutral
Illinois Tool Works Inc. (ITW)	Neutral
MSC Industrial Direct Company, Inc. (MSM)	Neutral
Systemax Inc. (SYX)	Neutral
WESCO International, Inc. (WCC)	Neutral
Applied Industrial Technologies, Inc. (AIT)	Underperform
Anixter International Inc. (AXE)	Underperform

Industry Comparison Industry: Building Products - Retail				Industry Peers		
	FAST Neutral	X Industry	S&P 500	GWW Neutral	HDS Neutral	MSM Neutral
<b>VGM Score</b>	<b>C</b>	-	-	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B</b>
Market Cap	19.84 B	1.22 B	19.79 B	15.44 B	4.93 B	3.32 B
# of Analysts	10	5.5	14	11	8	8
Dividend Yield	2.90%	0.00%	2.16%	2.00%	0.00%	5.01%
<b>Value Score</b>	<b>F</b>	-	-	<b>C</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>
Cash/Price	0.01	0.06	0.06	0.02	0.01	0.01
EV/EBITDA	16.80	8.78	11.74	11.20	8.75	7.61
PEG Ratio	1.68	1.53	2.15	1.61	NA	1.00
Price/Book (P/B)	7.47	0.97	2.65	7.52	3.65	2.63
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	21.11	4.82	10.40	13.05	6.96	9.21
P/E (F1)	26.87	10.30	17.72	18.09	11.67	15.04
Price/Sales (P/S)	3.68	0.29	2.06	1.34	0.80	1.00
Earnings Yield	3.68%	9.04%	5.46%	5.53%	8.58%	6.64%
Debt/Equity	0.23	1.39	0.70	0.93	1.79	0.21
Cash Flow (\$/share)	1.64	2.88	7.01	22.04	4.37	6.51
<b>Growth Score</b>	<b>A</b>	-	-	<b>C</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>C</b>
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	12.46%	14.07%	10.92%	9.58%	20.18%	9.73%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-7.68%	-9.97%	-2.65%	-8.07%	-26.99%	-24.69%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	5.22%	0.06%	5.93%	-1.82%	-2.21%	2.24%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	10.64%	10.93%	8.55%	2.17%	8.25%	2.88%
Current Ratio	4.25	2.13	1.24	2.12	2.04	1.75
Debt/Capital	18.37%	56.56%	42.36%	48.16%	64.14%	17.48%
Net Margin	14.83%	3.04%	11.64%	7.39%	7.35%	8.05%
Return on Equity	30.71%	11.66%	16.74%	45.63%	43.45%	19.23%
Sales/Assets	1.41	1.82	0.54	1.92	1.30	1.42
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-3.60%	0.00%	0.00%	-2.88%	-4.52%	-8.47%
<b>Momentum Score</b>	<b>B</b>	-	-	<b>F</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>F</b>
Daily Price Chg	7.03%	2.24%	2.56%	4.84%	0.36%	5.03%
1 Week Price Chg	10.30%	22.63%	16.01%	17.22%	24.88%	10.84%
4 Week Price Chg	0.09%	19.31%	11.39%	16.72%	10.98%	4.74%
12 Week Price Chg	-3.60%	-36.76%	-19.33%	-14.00%	-23.93%	-15.86%
52 Week Price Chg	-0.63%	-15.35%	-11.64%	-6.00%	-31.89%	-27.74%
20 Day Average Volume	6,440,447	671,811	3,452,738	412,744	1,949,966	726,337
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	-0.33%	-1.57%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-11.90%	-11.90%	-6.42%	-14.23%	-14.03%	-17.30%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-12.58%	-14.07%	-8.69%	-15.87%	-16.67%	-17.64%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	-24.92%	-24.92%	-11.08%	-27.42%	-11.56%	-36.47%

## Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	F
Growth Score	A
Momentum Score	B
VGM Score	C

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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