

HAND AND POWER TOOL SAFETY

According to the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), there are 71,000 lacerations caused by hand and power tools each year. Eye and lung injuries are also common with power tools due to the dust created from their use. It is essential to pay attention, understand your tools and wear the correct personal protective equipment to prevent injuring yourself or nearby employees with your tools.

OSHA also reports that employees with hand and power tool injuries miss an average of five days of work. For your safety, follow these simple rules:

- Always cut away from your body.
- Never carry tools in your pocket.
- Use the correct tool.
- Pass tools by the handle.
- Keep track of your tools when working at heights.
- Wear the correct personal protection equipment (PPE).

PERSONAL PROTECTION EQUIPMENT

PPE is one of the most effective ways to prevent injuries due to hand and power tools. Each type of hazard has its own form of PPE. For example, certain gloves can protect against cutting blades to avoid lacerations; and neoprene gloves are optimal for organic acids, gasoline and alcohol. Only 19% of those who suffered hand injuries while operating hand and power tools were wearing proper protection. Additionally, it is very common for power tools to create large amounts of dust, so eye protection like protective goggles and lung protection with a respirator should be used.

GENERAL POWER TOOL SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

- Disconnect tools when not in use.
- Never carry a tool by the cord or hose.
- Keep cords and hoses away from heat, oil and sharp edges.
- Avoid accidental starting.
- Wear proper apparel and PPE.
- Secure work with clamps or a vise, freeing both hands to operate the tool.

MACHINE GUARDS

In addition to recommended safety gear, many tools often supply their own forms of protective equipment – machine guards. Guards, such as the plastic cover on a table saw blade, are there to keep you safe, and with technology, these protections have become even more secure. Many table saws now shut off entirely when the blade senses skin, preventing cuts and lacerations. While machine guards offer additional protection, PPE is essential to your safety and must be worn when applicable.

WEAR AND TEAR

Hand and power tools can be subject to wear and tear when used consistently over time. Take proper care of your tools by cleaning and examining them after use. If there are visible cracks, frays or breaks, assume the tool is unsafe for use. If you have safety concerns, be sure to inform your supervisor. Taking the proper precautions can keep you and the ones around you safe.