

Using Portable Electric-powered Tools Safely

Portable electric-powered tools can be indispensable. They can also be deadly.

Each year, thousands of construction workers are injured using these otherwise handy tools. Their injuries range from the minor—cuts and punctures—to electrocution, amputation or worse.

The key to preventing injuries like these lies in understanding the tools you work with, knowing their hazards and taking precautions.

Think safety before powering up:

- Familiarize yourself with each tool you work with. Know what it is designed to do, its limitations and the potential hazards. Follow the manufacturer's instructions.
- Check electric cords looking for frayed wires or loose or broken switches. Label damaged tools and remove them from the work area until repairs are made.
- Make sure the electric-powered tools you use are double insulated or have a three-wire cord with a ground.
- Wear proper equipment including gloves, footwear and earplugs. Use safety glasses and face shields if appropriate.
- Never wear loose clothing, jewelry or anything that could get caught in a tool.

Powering up:

- Guards are there to protect you and should never be removed. Examine them periodically to ensure they are working properly and adjusted correctly.
- Keep your finger off the switch button while carrying a tool to prevent it from accidentally starting.
- Place your tools on an elevated bench, table or platform to prevent other workers from tripping on the tool or extension cord.

- Work in areas that are level, clutter-free and adequately lit. Always work a safe distance from others.
- Use a clamp or vise to hold an object in place while you work with it.
- Do not use electric-powered tools in a damp or wet location.

Servicing and storing tools:

- Carry tools by the handle, not the cord. Disconnect tool at the plug.
- Cut the power to a tool before changing accessories such as blades, bits and cutters.
- Store tools in a suitable box, rack or tray when not in use. Never store tools in an overhead location they could easily fall from.
- Do not wrap the cord around the tool for storage.

Portable power tools are an indispensable addition to any tool box. The key is to use them properly and follow safety procedures each and every time.

QUIZ

1. It is important to examine power tools looking for:
 - a. frayed cords
 - b. loose switches
 - c. broken switches
 - d. all of the above

2. A plug must have a ground before it can be safely used.
 - True
 - False

3. Wrapping the electrical cord around a power tool for storage is safe.
 - True
 - False

4. A guard can be removed as long as it is replaced quickly.
 - True
 - False

5. It is important to work a safe distance from other workers.
 - True
 - False

6. A power tool should never be carried by the cord.
 - True
 - False

7. Tools should be placed on the floor beside you when they are not in use.
 - True
 - False

8. It is important to understand the tools you work with and what they are for.
 - True
 - False

9. When should you disconnect the cord to a tool?
 - a. when changing the blade
 - b. when replacing the guard
 - c. when installing a bit or cutter
 - d. all of the above

BEFORE THE TALK - TIPS

Refer to the "Tips For Safety Talks!" for ideas on planning this safety meeting. Read through the article ahead of time to help you with your presentation. Add further questions to those we have provided at the end of this talk.

- Check with the safety office to see if there have been injuries related to power tools.
- Round up examples of the personal protective equipment required to operate various power tools.
- Where do defective or damaged tools go? Be prepared to explain your company's system for tagging and removing them from service.
- List any points you want to cover at this safety meeting

AFTER THE TALK- CHECKLIST

PROVIDED FOLLOW-UP TO WORKERS THAT DID

POORLY ON THE QUIZ

NAME: _____

DATE: _____

OBSERVED WORKERS

TASK(S): _____

DATE:

REFRESHER TRAINING

TOPIC(S): _____

DATE:

OTHER (DESCRIBE):

MEETING DATE: _____

LOCATION: _____

NOTES

ANSWERS:

1. D	6. True
2. True	7. False
3. False	8. True
4. False	9. D
5. True	10. true

ATTENDANCE

INSTRUCTOR: _____ **DATE:** _____

SAFETY TALK: _____