

TOOLBOX TALK: POWER TOOL SAFETY

Job or site _____

Date _____

Led by _____

Open with this

Everybody put your most used tool on the ground in front of you. We are looking at guards, cords and switches, and anything that fails comes off this job today.

The talk

Guards come off for one reason: they are in the way. And they are in the way because the tool is being used for something it was not designed for, or the material is not supported properly. Fix the setup and the guard stops being a problem.

A guard that has been wired, taped or zip tied back is not a modified tool, it is a defective one. Same with a trigger held on with tape and a dead man switch defeated with a cable tie. That tool goes in the truck.

The right tool matters more than people admit. A grinder is not a cutoff saw. A circular saw is not a demo tool. A screwdriver is not a chisel and a chisel is not a pry bar. Most hand injuries come from a tool being forced into a job it cannot do, slipping, and taking a hand with it.

Kickback and pinch are the two things to understand. Kickback is the blade grabbing and throwing the tool back at you, usually because the cut closed on the blade or the material moved. Pinch is the same event in the material. The answer to both is support the work properly, let the tool reach speed, and never stand in line with the cut.

Cords and batteries. Cords get inspected end to end, batteries get stored out of the sun and off the concrete in winter, and a battery pack that is swollen, dropped hard or hot to the touch goes out of service, not back in the charger.

And the small stuff that costs fingers. Unplug or remove the battery before changing a blade or a bit. Not trigger locked, not set down carefully. Disconnected. Every year somebody loses part of a hand to a tool they were sure was off.

Point at these before anybody starts

- Every guard on site: present, moving freely and not tied back
- Triggers and dead man switches, none of them taped or defeated
- Cords and plugs end to end, ground pins present

- Blades and bits: sharp, correct for the material, rated for the tool speed
- How the material is being supported for the cut people are about to make
- Battery packs, checking for swelling, damage and heat

The rules that apply

- Guards stay on and stay functional. A tool with a defeated guard or switch is removed from service the same day.
- Disconnect the power or remove the battery before changing blades, bits or accessories, or making any adjustment.
- Use the tool the manufacturer built for the job, at the rated speed, with an accessory rated for at least that speed.
- Support the workpiece so the cut cannot close on the blade, and never stand in line with the cut or the wheel.
- Inspect cords, plugs and housings before use, and never carry or lower a tool by its cord or hose.
- Eye protection every time, hearing protection for anything loud, and no loose sleeves, gloves or jewelry near a rotating tool.

Ask the crew

- Which tool on this job has a guard that has been in the way all week?
- What is the worst near miss you have had with a power tool, and what caused it?
- Who is changing a blade today, and how are they making sure the tool is dead first?

Close with this

Guards on, power off before you change anything, and the right tool for the cut. Anything defective goes in the truck now.

Attendance

Everybody who was present signs, including subcontractors and anybody visiting the site.

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This talk is general safety information for a crew briefing, not legal advice and not a substitute for the training your employees are required to have. Standards are quoted for orientation only. Check the current text of the standard and your own state plan, which may be stricter than the federal rule.