

# Cutting Tool Safety

## Circular Saws, Chainsaws and Other Cutting Tools

Cutting tools are indispensable for many jobs. However, small cuts, severe lacerations and even amputations can be sustained by individuals using these tools.

Too often employers assume workers know the safe way to use a cutting tool or operate power equipment, which can end with terrible results. Safety education is the best means for preventing these types of injuries. What follows are a series of safety awareness checklists that can be used to help educate new or existing employees on the “do’s and don’ts” of using various cutting tools.

### What to Wear

Safety starts with wearing the correct Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the job. This type of equipment is worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards when operating each of the cutting tools.

#### For Manual Cutting Tools

- Clothing should be well-fitted – no dangling or ragged edges
- Safety glasses
- Safety boots
- Leather gloves

#### For Circular Saws

- Clothing should be well-fitted – no dangling or ragged edges
- Safety glasses
- Safety boots
- Dust mask
- DO NOT wear gloves – they can get caught in the blade

#### For chainsaws

- Clothing should be well-fitted – no dangling or ragged edges
- Safety glasses
- Safety boots
- Leather gloves
- Chaps
- Hard hat
- Ear plugs

### Safety Precautions When Working

Take these safety tips on every job when working with cutting tools. This type of equipment requires care by the operator to use the tool as planned.

#### Manual Cutting Tool Safety

(Razors, saws, knives, pruners, chisels and snips)

- Maintain a safe, clean work area
- Evaluate the task and determine the right tool to use
- Always cut away from the body and face
- When cutting with one hand, always know where the other hand is
- Avoid trying to catch cutting tools that are dropped
- Never carry sharp tools in a front or back pocket
- Use tool belts, buckets and hand lines when climbing ladders
- Carry sharp tools with the blade down
- Store sharp tools in sheaths and tool boxes

## Circular Saw Safety

- Maintain a safe, clean work area
- Evaluate the task and determine if you are using the right tool
- Make sure you are using the right type of blade for the job
- Use sharp, clean blades – dull and/or dirty blades increase the chance of kickback
- Make sure the blade guard is in place
- Evaluate the work piece – support large panels; avoid small items that can't be properly secured; beware of knotty or warped pieces
- Clamp work pieces securely
- Never hold a work piece in your hand or on your lap while sawing
- Always hold the saw firmly with both hands
- Keep hands and the body away from and to the side of the blade
- Release the switch immediately if the blade binds or stalls
- Turn off a tool after a cut is made and allow the blade to stop before putting it down
- Never carry the saw with a finger on the trigger switch
- Beware of overheating from overuse – saw blades can warp and kick back
- Never use a circular saw to cut logs, roots or tree limbs

## Chainsaw Safety

- Don't work alone with a chainsaw
- Have good footing – clear the ground of any tripping/slipping hazards
- Plan out the task step by step – how are you going to do the job safely?
- Beware of “widowmakers” (broken or dead limbs) and spring poles (bent saplings)
- Keep others away from falling trees or limbs
- Make sure the saw is in good condition – is the chain sharpened; is the chain tension correct; is it properly lubricated; are all nuts and lugs secure?
- Only refuel the saw when the engine is cool
- Don't cut from a ladder if avoidable
- Stand to the side when cutting
- Cut at full throttle
- Keep both hands on the saw handles
- Don't cut above chest height
- Don't push the saw and don't bury the tip of the saw in the wood

## For More Information:



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