



OH&S Bulletin

Hand and Portable Power Tools

Recent injuries involving power tools remind us of the importance of using them correctly, wearing the appropriate protective equipment and ensuring they are well maintained.

One CFMEU member was lucky that his injuries weren't more serious when the dodgy demo saw he was using kicked back and hit him in the mouth. The saw should never have been used because the blade had a tooth missing and cracks around the others.

- Always check any tools before use, especially the guard and lead. It is essential that they are maintained and repaired regularly. Not only does it ensure that they are safe but it makes them easier to use. Tools found to be defective should be reported and replaced immediately.

- Safety glasses or face shields should always be worn where chips or dust may fly or where tools may break. Personnel operating drills, saws and grinders should not wear gloves, ties or loose clothing or anything that might catch in the equipment being used.

Eye damage and hearing loss are two of the most common injuries. Another member was cutting aluminium with a drop saw and even though he was wearing safety glasses they were obviously inadequate because he ended up with aluminium shavings in his eye. In both of

the above incidents a face shield may have prevented the injuries. Some personal protective clothing may be a bit uncomfortable and it is tempting to use the minimum requirements, but it is worth thinking carefully about the potential risks because injuries can be extremely uncomfortable.



- Always read the owners manual and learn how to use each tool correctly. It is important that power tools are only used by workers trained to use them properly and that they are only used for the job

for which they were designed.

Another incident involving a power saw resulted in a young worker injuring his hand when the timber he was cutting sprang up and caused his thumb to catch on the clip. It's so easy to get used to power tools. They say that familiarity breeds contempt, which could be an exaggeration, but it certainly can make people less careful - we all know chippy's missing bits of their hands.

- Always ensure that the trigger is in the off position before putting the tool down or connecting power to the tool.

- Before servicing the tool always disconnect the power supply.

- Plugs and sockets must be connected properly and maintained regularly by a competent electrician.



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- When working on elevated work platforms, tools should be pulled up and lowered with a rope.

- When working overhead on scaffolds, tools must be kept in tool bags or boxes where practicable, to prevent them from falling and injuring others below.

- Workers on elevated platforms with portable power tools should wear a safety belt to protect against a fall or serious injury.

- When work takes place on, or near, electrical apparatus only properly insulated and non-conductive hand tools are to be used. Insulation should be tested at regular intervals by a competent electrician.

- In work places near inflammable materials or explosive only tools made from non-ferrous metals should be used. A spark struck from normal steel tools could

cause a fire or explosion. Spark proof tools should be inspected regularly in case steel splinters have become embedded and need grinding out to ensure safe usage.

- Workers must not carry knives or sharp tools in their clothes pockets. If the work requires such tools they should be carried in a strong tool belt fitted with pouches deep enough to secure such tools safely. Cutting edges and sharp points should always be placed downwards inside the pouch.



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