

Safety First

Saw Safety 101 by Kelli Gabel

Even safe saws are only as safe as the person operating them.

Saw safety is a matter of equipment being appropriately operated in a safe environment, by well trained employees. If any of these individual items are not followed, it is easy to assume that someone could be seriously injured using this equipment.

WHAT YOUR EMPLOYEES NEED TO KNOW!

Each saw in a component manufacturing facility should be inspected and verified that it meets current industry and regulatory (both the manufacturer and OSHA's) safety standards. Every inspection should be documented and the records must be kept in a secure location. Undocumented inspections are useless in the event of an accident that would result in an insurance or OSHA inspection.

Remember, even safe saws are only as safe as the person operating them. Never assume that an employee knows how to properly operate any piece of equipment in your manufacturing operation. It is your responsibility to properly train the employee in the manner that you as the employer want the tool or machine operated. This must be done prior to a new employee or existing employee operating any type of saw. **No training equals no operation!**

GENERAL SAW RULES

It is imperative for each individual in a plant to know the general saw safety rules, even if they typically only use only one type of saw. Each facility has distinct equipment with specific safety standards and operating procedures. Therefore, it is necessary that you develop these rules specific to your location and familiarize the employees accordingly. The safety rules include:

1. Equipment maintenance for accident prevention.

- Ensuring that the proper lockout/tagout procedures are in place in order to prevent accidental start-up before any inspections or repairs begin.
- Checking all equipment for loose parts, fractures, bends or any other condition that could cause a malfunction or mishap.
- Inspecting the saw blade, belts, chains and related components used to make adjustments to the saw systems.
- If during any inspection you discover damaged equipment, it must be reported immediately—not when your shift is over!

2. Wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE).

- Safety glasses
- Hearing protection
- Hard hats
- Hard sole shoes
- Breathing/dust masks
- Gloves

3. DO NOT wear loose clothing, jewelry or anything else that could get caught. Keep long hair back in a ponytail and away from the front of the body.

4. Always practice good housekeeping. Keep your work area clear of scraps, dust and debris so no one accidentally slips or trips.

Top Ten OSHA Violations for SIC Code 2439

(Includes wood truss manufacturing operations)

1. Woodworking Machinery Requirements
2. Electrical, Wiring Methods, Components and Equipment
3. The Control of Hazardous Energy, Lockout/Tagout
4. Occupational Noise Exposure
5. Mechanical Power-Transmission Apparatus
6. Hazard Communication
7. Machines, General Requirements
8. Portable Fire Extinguishers
9. Powered Industrial Trucks
10. Guarding Floor and Wall Openings

5. Be sure that all appropriate guards are in place.
6. Familiarize yourself with all safety features before operating a saw. This includes having an automatic return or stop activated.
7. Make any blade adjustments prior to activation.
8. Do not leave a running saw unattended.

Again, these general safety rules apply to all saws, but there are further safety guidelines for each machine. Here are some universal procedures for different saw types:

1. **Circular Saw:** A circular saw must always be used on a solid base when operating. Be sure that the saw is grounded or double insulated to prevent electric shock and never cut cross handed.
2. **Table Saw:** The saw blade should be high enough to cut the stock, but no higher, and the fence and spreader should be aligned with the blade. To avoid kick-backs, push the lumber through with a push stick and never stand behind the machine.
3. **Component Saw:** Do not stand in the direction of the rotating blades. If lumber is stuck, never reach into the machine.



4. **Radial Arm Saw:** Always feed the stock against the direction of the grain and never let your fingers go past the cutting line. This is the most important aspect of operating this type of saw. Wooden fences should be replaced as often as necessary and do not operate a radial saw that has a worn fence.

From time to time, we need to be reminded of safety procedures, even though employees may have operated the same piece of equipment for years. Keep in mind these safety procedures are to help reduce and eliminate accidents in a manufacturing plant. **Familiarity should not breed carelessness!**

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