TOOLBOX TALK #15

Using power tools

Updated October 2017

IDENTIFY the right tool for the right job

Before starting work with a power tool you should check you’re using the right tool for the right job. In some cases the environment may pose a risk when using a certain tool. Make sure:

- work surfaces are stable and clear of other material that may fly off
- there are no pipes or other electrical wiring that could cause a risk
- there is no explosive or flammable gas, dust or vapour – particularly if using a Power Actuated Tool
- work surfaces are stable – for example never work on a ladder while using a power tool
- there are no obstacles in the area that you could trip on

Once you’ve chosen the right tool for the job only load it immediately prior to it being used.

Identifying, Assessing, Managing and reviewing critical risks is a Canterbury Safety Charter commitment.

Remember I AM safe on site where it’s up to everyone on site to understand and manage the critical risks you’ll come across.

This toolbox talk is intended to help start a health and safety conversation and raise awareness about using power tools. It is not designed as a complete risk management tool for the activity.

Using power tools on site

Power tools are frequently used on site. They come in various forms – there are Power Actuated Tools or Gas, Pneumatic or Electric nail guns and other power tools. You should never underestimate the recoil power of these tools, and always point the tool away from yourself and anyone else when it’s in use.

Project site: [___]

Employer: [___]

Foreman/Supervisor: [___]

Date: [___]

Attendees: [___]

I AM safe using power tools
ASSESS the training and protection needed

Training
In many cases power tools can only be used by a person who holds an appropriate and current certificate of competence – such as the use of Gas, Pneumatic or Electric Nail Guns and Power Actuated Tools.

Their training should have covered the care, use, and maintenance of the tool, how to prepare it and check it before it’s used, selecting the right cartridge, pin, guard or shield, loading and firing procedures and safety precautions, misfire procedure and risks.

Operators should ensure they are in a safe and well-balanced position before firing.

PPE
Eyes and ears are most at risk when using power tools – from the risk of dust and noise. It’s important that operators are wearing:

- appropriate eye protection that fits correctly especially if they are looking down
- appropriate hearing protection to avoid noise-induced hearing loss
- if appropriate, a respirator – particularly if the operation will generate dust, which is even more of a risk when cutting concrete. See toolbox talk on construction dust including silica.
- long sleeves – particularly if loose items are likely to flick up while the tool is in operation
- make sure there are no loose items on you like jewellery.

Keep others on site well away from the work area – and where possible put a sign up to indicate a power tool is in use.

MANAGE with frequent checks
Some tools require specific and frequent checks for example all Power Actuated Tools must be certificated every six months by the manufacturer’s agent. However for all tools, you should:

- inspect them daily, and immediately prior to use, for any defects
- repair or replace all worn or damaged components immediately – label any damaged tools and tag ‘them ‘do not use’
- check all guards and fasteners are in place, are secure, and in good condition.

Always store your site’s power tools in a secure place when they’re not in use.

Where do we get more information?
The Safety Charter’s Critical Risk Using Power Tools webpage has much more information and is regularly updated. You can view it here or by clicking on Improve Health & Safety – Critical Risks – Using Power Tools from the homepage.

If you want toolbox talks on the other 12 critical risks you can check them out online.

Employee issues raised:

Date to be resolved by:

This toolbox talk was written with information from WorkSafe New Zealand and ACC. Thank you.