

TOOLBOX TALK #12

INSPECT YOUR POWER TOOLS

Workers who use hand and/or power tools can expose themselves and coworkers to personal injuries and illnesses such as lacerations, crushes, burns, amputations, fractures and musculoskeletal disorders, skin and pulmonary illnesses, sight and hearing damage, and electrical shock and burns.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in 2016 that the private industry sector recorded 40,600 injuries and illnesses involving days away from work cases (DAWC) involving tools, 29,680 of these injuries happened while using non-powered tools and 10,920 during the use of powered tools. The hand was the part of the body most affected. Here's what to check for with POWER TOOLS to reduce the risk of these injuries.



In general

- When not in use they should be disconnected from the energy source and properly stored.
- They do not show signs of being operated outside of their design specifications.
- The tools, besides being visually inspected, should also be briefly turned on in order to check for abnormal noises, malfunction of switches, etc.

If electric driven, check the following

- Electrical cords are in good condition and have a three-pronged plug or are double insulated.
- The cordless tools have compatible rechargeable batteries and chargers in good condition.

If pneumatic driven, check the following

- That the compressed air supply is adequate to the ratings of the various tools operated by the end users.
- Hoses do not present damage or splices; their pressure ratings and diameters are adequate.
- When using quick disconnect type fittings, the male end is installed on the tool.
- Radiator hose clamps are not used to secure air hoses to fittings.

If hydraulic driven, check the following

- Warning signs (maximum pressures, working loads, etc.) are conspicuously displayed and easy to read.
- Hoses, couplings, fittings and valves follow manufacturer's specifications and do not present any sign of damage.
- Operators are aware of the possible existence of "residual energy" even after the equipment has been shut down.

Damaged, modified and home-made tools

- Check if there is a simple and clear policy, job safety analysis (JSA), etc. regarding the use of tools, including a protocol for addressing damaged, modified and home-made ones.

Proactive final recommendations

- The cleaning, inspection and storage of the tools should be accomplished at the end of every shift.
- Protocols for periodic inspection of the tools should be part of your Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Safety hazards associated with tools should be addressed in the JSA.
- Workers should demonstrate knowledge and hands-on skills with regard to the correct use and maintenance of the tools in use – additional training should be provided whenever necessary.