

TOOLBOX TALK #31

CIRCULAR SAW SAFETY

Circular saws are powerful hand tools that should be operated only by trained and qualified workers. Using circular saws without being trained – or flouting the rules – can lead to serious or fatal injuries. OSHA warns of three major hazards workers face when using a circular saw: the point of operation, kickbacks and flying particles.



Point of operation

Injuries can occur if an operator's hands slip while cutting or if they're too close to the blade during cutting. To help prevent these injuries, make sure hands are out of the line of the cut.

Kickbacks

When a blade “catches” the stock and throws it back towards the operator, this is called a kickback. Kickbacks happen when the blade height is incorrect or if the blade has not been properly maintained. They also are more likely to occur when ripping rather than cross-cutting. “Kickbacks also can occur if safeguards are not used or if poor-quality lumber is cut,” OSHA adds. Help prevent kickback by:

- Using anti-kickback fingers to hold down stock.
- Using the correct blade for the cutting action. For example, don't use a cross-cut blade for ripping.
- Operating the saw at the manufacturer's recommended speed.
- Keeping the blade sharp.
- Leaving enough clearance space for stock.
- Supporting all parts of the stock, including the cut and uncut ends, scrap and finished product.

Flying hazards

Operating a circular saw can cause wood chips, broken saw teeth and splinters to be thrown from the blade and toward anyone nearby. Help prevent flying particles by removing cracked saw blades from service right away.