

# Safety Facts: Powered Saws\*



A saw is a tool with a blade used for cutting material such as wood, metal, floor tiles, etc. They can be either manually operated (e.g., hack saw) or power operated using electricity or compressed air (e.g., circular saw). This toolbox talk will deal with powered saws.

## Key characteristics of powered saws

Some saws are portable (e.g., circular, jig, reciprocating, etc.) while others are table mounted (e.g., metal band saw, table saw, radial arm saw, etc.). They can use a variety of blades depending on the type of material to be cut. These blades can either operate in a rotating or reciprocating direction.

## Why is it important?

While powered saws make it easier to cut material, they also have the potential to injure workers. From 2017 to 2021, there were 1233 WorkSafeBC claims for powered saws. Additionally, let's also consider the number of workers that got injured by a saw and only sought first aid and those who treated the wound themselves and did not report the injury.

## Associated risks/hazards

The major risk with saws is contact with the sharp edges of the saw blade. If you search Recent Incident page at WorkSafe BC website you will find all kinds of saw injuries such as Injuries to hands, fingers, arms, leg, toes, etc. plus several more for amputated fingers.

Workers have been injured with saws due to:

- Placing body parts too close to the blade
- Removing blade guards
- Losing their balance while using a saw
- Kickback of the material being cut resulting in the worker getting hit
- Kickback of the saw that caused the blade to contact a body part
- Failure to use a push stick with a table saw

Other hazards associated with saws can be:

- Noise
- Vibration
- Contact with hazardous energy (electricity or compressed air)
- Creation of hazardous dust or fumes

## Preventive next steps

- Be trained and authorized before using a saw as per Occupational Health and Safety Regulation (OHSR) Section 4.10

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instructions before using a saw
- Wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) depending on the hazards of the saw, e.g., flying particles, noise, etc.
- Never remove a guard from the saw
- Never alter the electric plug by removing the ground lead
- Do not operate saws in wet conditions or in environments that are explosive
- Select the correct type of blade for the material being cut
- Check material for foreign objects before cutting it
- Where appropriate, use a push stick to feed material into the saw
- Always allow the saw to come to a full stop before trying to work on it e.g., change the blade
- De-energize and lock out saw machines when unserviceable as per OHSR Section 10.3
- De-energize and lock out saw machines to prevent unauthorized use.



## For additional resources visit:

*Authorization* Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Section 4.10

*When lockout required* Occupational Health and Safety Regulation Section 10.3

