

Hand and Power Tools

Handout

Bedrock Construction Company probably did not require safety glasses when chipping rocks with rocks to make tools or weapons. Chances are, some workers received injuries by flying rock chips. Do you know of any construction workers who still work like that, and put themselves and coworkers in danger? The old saying, "the right tool for the job" hasn't changed. Let's take a quick overview of OSHA requirements for tool control and safe use.

Condition of tools — All hand and power tools and similar equipment, whether furnished by your employer or is your personal tool, must be safe. When tools are no longer safe they must be tagged as such and either repaired before use, or thrown away.

Guarding — When power operated tools are designed to have guards, they must be equipped with the guards when in use. This means you cannot remove a guard because it gets in your way. The best method is to learn to use the tool with the guard attached and appreciate the protection it provides.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) — When using hand or power tools your employer must provide you with proper PPE for protection when exposed to:

- Falling, flying, abrasive, or splashing objects.
- Harmful dusts, fumes, mists, vapors, or gases.

All PPE must meet the requirements of and be maintained according to the OSHA rules.

Switches — Switch action on power tools is important for safety reasons. OSHA has requirements for one of three types of switches on all power tools. They are:

- *Positive "on-off" switches* – are a requirement on hand-held platen sanders, grinders (2" dia. wheel or less), routers, planers, shears, scroll saws and similar tools.
- *Momentary contact "on-off" control switches* – apply to hand-held powered drills, tappers, disc sanders, belt sanders, reciprocating saws, saber saws, and other similar operating powered tools. The tool may have a lock-on control provided that turnoff can be accomplished by a single motion of the same finger or fingers that turn it on.
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- *Constant pressure switches that will shut off the power when the pressure is released* – are required on all other hand-held powered tools, such as circular saws, chain saws, and percussion tools without positive accessory holding means.

From simple screwdrivers to reciprocating cut-off saws, tools are the lifeblood of the construction industry. Taking care of your personal tools and company tools is an automatic step towards safe work habits.

