

Machine Guarding

Handout

Many machines and power tools commonly used on construction sites have guards on them to protect you from the danger of hazardous moving parts such as belts; gears; shafts; pulleys; sprockets; spindles; drums; fly wheels; chains; or other reciprocating, rotating, or moving parts of equipment. These moving parts must be guarded, as required by OSHA regulations, if they are exposed.

Common types of equipment on which you might find machine guards include:

- Circular saws and other power saws.
- Jointers.
- Grinders.
- Routers.

Guards, as necessary, are provided to protect the operator and others from:

- Point of operation hazards.
- In-running nip point hazards.
- Rotating parts.
- Flying chips and sparks.

Never remove safety guards when the tool is being used or in operation. If the guard is not on, you are exposed to hazards from the moving parts of the machine or tool.

For example, portable circular saws must be equipped with guards. An upper guard must cover the entire blade. A retractable lower guard must cover the teeth except when it makes contact with the work material. The lower guard must automatically return to the closed position when you're done making the cut. Otherwise, you may be exposed to the cutting action of the blade.

Such a guard is often defeated or purposely by-passed because a worker thinks he can get more done without it on. However, the worker exposes himself to unnecessary risks of cuts, being hit by flying objects, and other hazards. And it is against OSHA regulations to defeat the guard, too. So just don't do it.

