Using Portable Electric-Powered Tools Safely



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Portable electric-powered tools can be indispensable. They can also be deadly.

Each year, thousands of construction workers are injured using these otherwise handy tools. Their injuries range from minor—cuts, and punctures—to electrocution, amputation, or worse.

The key to preventing injuries like these lies in understanding the tools you work with, knowing their hazards, and taking precautions.

Think safety before powering up:

- Familiarize yourself with each tool you work with. Know what it is designed to do, its limitations, and the potential hazards. Follow the manufacturer’s instructions.
- Check electric cords looking for frayed wires or loose or broken switches. Label damaged tools and remove them from the work area until repairs are made.
- Make sure the electric-powered tools you use are double insulated or have a three-wire cord with a ground.
- Wear proper equipment including gloves, footwear, and earplugs. Use safety glasses and face shields if appropriate.
- Never wear loose clothing, jewelry, or anything that could get caught in a tool.

Powering up:

- Guards are there to protect you and should never be removed. Examine them periodically to ensure they are working properly and adjusted correctly.
- Keep your finger off the switch button while carrying a tool to prevent it from accidentally starting.
- Place your tools on an elevated bench, table, or platform to prevent other workers from tripping on the tool or extension cord.
- Work in areas that are level, clutter-free, and adequately lit. Always work a safe distance from others.

- Use a clamp or vise to hold an object in place while you work with it.
- Do not use electric-powered tools in a damp or wet location.

Servicing and storing tools:

- Carry tools by the handle, not the cord. Disconnect tool at the plug.
- Cut the power to a tool before changing accessories such as blades, bits, and cutters.
- Store tools in a suitable box, rack, or tray when not in use. Never store tools in an overhead location they could easily fall from.
- Do not wrap the cord around the tool for storage.

Portable power tools are an indispensable addition to any toolbox. The key is to use them properly and follow safety procedures each and every time.