

Using Portable Electric-Powered Tools Safely

Failing to properly use and maintain electric-powered tools causes thousands of cuts, punctures, pinches, amputations, and electrocutions each year. Tools can seriously injure or kill the user if not properly maintained or used. Everyone who uses tools must learn to recognize the hazards associated with the different types of tools and the safety precautions necessary to prevent those hazards. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration has specific rules for using electric-powered tools. Following these guidelines, along with using your own good judgment will help keep you safe.

Before you use a tool:

- Verify that it bears an electrical test label to indicate it successfully passed inspection and tests for electrical safety within the previous six months.
- Know the application, limitation, and potential hazards of the tool. Operate according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Inspect the cord for the proper type. Electric-powered tools must either have a three-wire cord with ground or be double insulated. Never use a plug that has its ground prong removed.
- Inspect the tool for frayed cords, loose or broken switches, and other obvious problems. Tools that fail this inspection must not be used. These must be removed from service and labeled "Do Not Use" until repairs are made.

When using the tool:

- Do not use electric-powered tools in damp or wet locations.
- Keep guards in place, in working order, and properly adjusted. Safety guards must never be removed when the tool is being used.
- Avoid accidental starting. Do not hold a finger on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Safety switches must be kept in working order and must not be modified. If you feel it necessary to modify a safety switch for a job you're doing, use another tool.
- Work areas should have adequate lighting and be free of clutter.
- Observers should remain a safe distance away from the work area.
- Be sure to keep good footing and maintain good balance.
- Do not wear loose clothing, ties, or jewelry when operating tools.
- Wear appropriate gloves and footwear while using tools.

Servicing and storing tools:

- Never modify a tool to use for a job it's not intended to do.
- Disconnect power tools while servicing or storing.
- Do not wrap the cord around the tool for storage.
- Store tools in a dry place.