

SAFETY ALERT!



Electrical Tools

This safety alert highlights the dangers associated with working with electrical tools and suggests control measures for managing the risk.

Background

Each year many workers using portable electrical tools and equipment suffer electric shock. Injuries, including those caused by ground faults, range from minor injuries to serious secondary injuries. There is also the possibility of electrocution. A secondary injury occurs when a worker recoils from an electric shock and, as a result, sustains an injury. Depending largely on the surrounding physical conditions, such an accident can result in a bruise, a broken bone, or a fatal fall.

Contributing factors

The main dangers associated with electric tools are:

- lack of grounding or double insulation,
- broken or disarmed safety devices such as retractable guards,
- unfamiliarity with the tool,
- failure to hold tool securely, and
- faulty tool leads and extension leads.

Action Required

Make sure the tool is grounded and the cord polarized or double-insulated.

“Grounded” means an approved three-wire lead with a three-prong plug. Use the tool only in a three-pole outlet.

Double-insulated tools are labelled as such. The label will feature aD, aD inside a square, a double square.

Make sure the casing of a double-insulated tool is not cracked, split, or broken.

LEADS

Inspect tool leads and extension leads daily for damage.

Keep leads clear of the tool during use.

Inspect tool leads and extension leads for kinks, cuts, cracked or broken insulation, and makeshift repairs.

Don't use the lead to lift, lower, or carry an electric tool. Don't disconnect the tool by pulling or jerking on the lead. You will damage the lead, loosen connections, and run the risk of shocks and short circuits and possible electrocution.

Protect leads from traffic. Run them through conduit or between planks along either side. If necessary, run leads overhead above work or busy areas. If any lead feels more than warm to the touch, check the circuit for overloading.

Report any shocks from tools or leads to your supervisor. Tag the tool and don't use it.

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