

Equipment, Machine and Tool Guards toolbox talk

A simple, 5 minute outline of what to cover in a toolbox talk on Equipment, Machine and Tool Guards.

One of the major causes of accidents occurring on worksites is the misuse of machinery. Moving machine parts can cause severe injuries such as crushed body parts, burns, blindness, and cuts. This is why most dangerous machinery has built-in or attached safety guards.

In this housekeeping toolbox talk, we will discuss the different types of safety guards, the purpose of the guards, and we'll finish by discussing some good safety tips when working with dangerous machinery.

Why Run a Machine Guarding Toolbox Talk?

- Helps us all to be more aware of hazards when working with machinery
- Understand which machine guards to use and when
- Gives us all some good tips for how to minimize workplace accidents
- Ensures we all know our responsibilities to maintain a safe workplace (including management)
- Safety improves productivity

4 Types of Machine Guards

There are four types of machine guards that you should be aware of and know the difference between.

- **Fixed Guard.** This is a permanently fixed guard that is part of the machine. Machines will have fixed guards whenever possible because they provide the best level of protection.
- **Interlocking Guards.** These guards will automatically shut off or disengage the machine when the guard is opened or removed. You

cannot use the machine again until the guard is put back into position.

- **Self-Adjusting Guards.** These guards adjust depending on the size and movement of the material. The guard will move out of the way to allow the material to pass through or, in the case of a saw, when the material is being cut.
- **Adjustable Guards.** These guards can be adjusted when required to accommodate different sizes of the material to be worked on or cut. The downside is that accidents are more likely to happen due to human error.

The Purpose of Machine Guarding

Safeguards are installed and maintained on our machinery to:

- **Prevent Contact.** Machine guards are there to reduce (and hopefully eliminate) the possibility that the machine operator or a co-worker's body parts come into contact with the machine in a way that is likely to cause an accident to occur.
- **Ensure Machine Safety.** Good machine guards provide safety to the operator and others working around the machine. They are designed to not be removed and to be durable so that safety can be improved in the workplace.
- **Protect from Falling Objects.** The guard protects from other objects falling into the moving parts of the machine. When this happens, it can cause injuries to occur to the operator and those around the machine.
- **Help You Do Your Job.** Some machine guarding is there to help you do your job more efficiently and more accurately. For example, guarding on some machines also acts as a way to accurately make measurements.

Machine Safety Tips

- Before using a tool or machine, make sure the guarding is in good working order.
- Make sure all tools are in good condition and have been regularly maintained (check the records).
- Only use machines and tools that you have been trained to use.
- Make sure it is the right tool for the job.
- Make sure the tool is clean and free from any debris that could create a hazard.
- Always operate machines according to the manufacturer's instructions.
- Always use the correct personal protective equipment (PPE).

- Disconnect tools from the power when not in use, during servicing, and when changing accessories.
- Follow the correct lockout/tag-out procedures.
- Make sure all other staff members are a safe distance away from the machine when you're operating it.
- NEVER remove machine guarding.

Key Takeaways

- There are four types of guards (fixed, interlocking, self-adjusting, and adjustable). Each one has different purposes.
- Guarding helps to prevent injuries to you and your co-workers as well as helping you do your job.
- Always use machinery as per the manufacturer's instructions.
- Make sure you are trained in how to operate a machine before using it.
- Remember never to remove guards from the machines you are using!

[See all our toolbox talk topics here](#)