

# SAFETY ALERT

## 357 – Cuts and Lacerations

### Background

Recent incidents across PPS, Open Space, Commercial Paint, Electrical Technologies, and FM show a recurring rise in lacerations, including several events requiring stitches or urgent medical treatment.

These incidents include:

- Hedge-trimmer leg and hand lacerations
- Cuts from sharp steel edges, clamps, studs, and tools
- Knife and scraper slips
- Drill kickback causing open wounds
- Head and upper-body lacerations from falling, tripping, or uncontrolled movement

Many of these injuries were preventable through proper tooling practices, PPE compliance, and basic line-of-fire controls.

### Safety Issues

The causes of these incidents often involve:

#### Contact with a powered tool blade

- Hedgers contacting legs, hands, or thighs
- Accidental activation of tools
- Workers reaching to catch falling tools
- One-handed tool handling, allowing blade rotation into the body

#### Sharp edges

- Cuts from steel studs, steel clamps, pipe edges, glass shards
- Materials not deburred, taped, or insulated
- No gloves or wrong glove type used

#### Line-of-Fire incident

- Hands used to stabilise materials
- Scraping, cutting, or drilling with body parts behind the blade or in the impact zone
- Tools slipping due to torque, resistance, or awkward posture

#### Poor tool control

- Knives and scrapers slipping during high-force tasks
- Drill kickback causing contact with the operator
- Tools handled while walking, loading, or unloading

#### PPE non-compliance

- Gloves removed to “make the task easier.”
- Chaps not worn during hedger work
- Incorrect gloves (non-cut-rated)
- PPE was removed before the tools were powered down

#### Environmental and task factors

- Hidden hazards in vegetation (wire, posts, debris)
- Trips and stumbles causing secondary lacerations
- Working at a pace leading to compromised technique



**Report all incidents and near misses**

Please display on Safety Noticeboards and raise this matter at the next Toolbox Talk or Safety Meeting.

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### Recommended Controls

#### Tooling controls

- Use two hands for the operation of powered hedgers.
- Conduct pre-start checks: blade condition, guards, trigger lock, stop button.
- Apply edge protection on steel, studs, clamps, and sharp surfaces before starting work.
- Do not use hands to stabilise equipment, instead use clamps, vices, or supports only.
- Treat battery tools as "live" unless the battery is disconnected.

#### PPE controls

- Class F gloves for all cutting, trimming, scraping, or metal-edge handling.
- Chaps are required for all hedger use.
- Eye and face protection for any tool with potential debris projection.
- PPE removal is a **stop-work** event, not an approved workaround.

#### Task controls

- Understand line-of-fire before each cutting/drilling task.
- Prohibit work above shoulder height with hedgers; use pole tools instead.

#### Competency and supervision

- Mandatory VOC for high-risk tools
- Supervisors should conduct "tool handling observations".
- Stop-work authority encouraged for any unsafe tool handling or PPE lapse.

### What is the line of fire?

Line of Fire is any situation where a person could be struck, hit, pinched, impaled, crushed, cut, or otherwise injured when something moves, slips, fails, kicks back, or falls.

Line of fire = the impact zone where your body is exposed to harm if something goes wrong.



### Conclusion

Lacerations continue to occur due to predictable and controllable factors:

- Tooling errors,
- PPE gaps, and
- Line-of-fire incidents

By resetting expectations around tool control, using PPE, and being aware of the risks, each BU can reduce preventable injuries.

For more information contact [safety@programmed.com.au](mailto:safety@programmed.com.au)  
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