



## Power Saws

*UL urges precaution to minimize "kickback"*

Whether you're remodeling a basement, fixing a porch or building a deck, chances are you'll use a power saw this spring. Power saws make any home fix-it job easier, but be careful - contact with saw blades spinning at 5000 revolutions per minute sends more than 84,000 people to emergency rooms every year.

Kickback is a leading cause of power saw injuries. A hazard inherent to all power saws regardless of brand or style, it occurs when the material binds or pinches the saw blade during a cut. In a split second, kickback can jerk the saw out of a user's hands or shoot the piece of wood he's cutting back toward him.

"Kickback is common to anyone who picks up a power saw, whether you're a professional carpenter or a weekend do-it-yourselfer," says John Drengenberg, manager of Consumer Affairs for Underwriters Laboratories (UL). "But by taking the time to learn how to use a saw safely and taking precautions to minimize the effects of kickback, anyone can cut with confidence."

Drengenberg offers the following UL precautions to address kickback and other potential hazards when using power saws.

### Before you start

- Before using any power tool, always read the manufacturer's instruction manual. It will tell you about tool-specific safety features, how to make adjustments and make use of all its usage functions to help you do the job right.
- Make sure you use the right saw for the task. For example, don't use a circular saw for cutting tree limbs or logs. A chain saw is the appropriate tool in this case.
- Limit the depth of cut setting to your work piece. Never set the blade any deeper than 1/8" to 1/4" below the work piece. Remember, kickback becomes more intense when there is more blade that can be pinched.
- Use the appropriate blade for the task. Clean, sharp blades in good condition greatly reduce the potential for kickback. Keep saw blades sharp to minimize stalling and kickback. Saw blades that are chipped, bent, or in any way damaged should be discarded immediately.
- Never alter a product or remove safety features such as blade guards or electric plug grounding pins.
- Make sure the switch is in the "OFF" position before plugging in a power saw.
- Keep the floor/ground area clear of debris to prevent trips and falls.
- Always wear safety glasses. Never wear watches, necklaces, bracelets and long sleeves while cutting. Any loose clothing and dangling jewelry can get caught in the saw's moving parts.

### Making the safest cut

- Check the lower guard to make sure it operates smoothly and closes crisply every time to protect you from the spinning saw blade.
- Always keep two hands on the saw. When your hands are on the control handles, they can't be cut.
- Use clamps or a vise to hold work in place. Never make cuts across the knee, foot or hand. Securing the work piece allows you to keep two hands on the saw and increases your control over a kickback.
- Never stand directly behind the saw. Always stand off to the side. Keep your hands out of the path of the saw blade.
- Pay attention while making a complete cut. Alert users should feel resistance as work piece or saw becomes harder to push through. In



some instances, the blade may screech as it binds or slows, signaling a potential kickback situation.

- If the blade begins to bind while making a cut, immediately stop the cut and hold the saw and work piece completely still. Always wait for the saw blade to stop before pulling away from a cut to avoid kickback.
- Keep the cord away from the cutting area and position it so that it will not be caught on the work piece.
- If you need to use an extension cord with your saw make sure it's in good condition and is heavy enough to carry the current your power saw will draw.

#### **After cutting**

- Keep children away from the work area at all times. Never allow them to operate power saws.
- Unplug or remove battery packs from all portable electrically operated power saws when not in use. These tools contain electricity even when turned "OFF."
- Make sure all tools are put away and out of the reach of children.
- Power saws, like any household appliance, need to be maintained and used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Following these precautions and manufacturer's instructions helps you complete all your home improvement projects.

For more consumer safety information, visit <http://www.ul.com/regulators/pubedu.html>

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