

OSHA Training Toolbox Talk: Working Safely With Radial Arm Saws

[Reference 1910.213 / 1926.304]

Thanks to the versatility of radial arm saws, productivity and quality of work on the job has been vastly improved. However, these pieces of equipment also present a variety of unique safety hazards that must be addressed if injuries are to be avoided. Here is an overview of some recommended steps we should take to help us avoid hazards associated with radial arm saws.

- Always inspect your radial arm saw before first use each day, as well as any time it has been relocated and re-installed in a different place. Make certain it is set up relatively level, secured in place to prevent accidental movement, and that there are no people working behind the saw who could be struck by debris.
- Make certain the saw blade is the proper size and speed rating for the brand and model of radial arm saw you are using, and that it is suitable for use on the type of materials you will be cutting. Also make sure the blade is firmly secured in place, and that there are no broken teeth, bent or broke sections, or other damage.
- Make certain the guards provided with the radial arm saw are installed and functioning properly. These include the fixed guard that covers the arbor and upper portions of the blade on each side, as well as the self-adjusting guards that helps prevent inadvertent contact with the lower portions of the blade. *(Refer to the handout that comes with this toolbox talk for photos of unguarded saw and also properly guarded saws).*
- When making repetitive cuts, set the upper travel-stop (if equipped) or install a travel stop so that the saw does not travel towards you any further than necessary to make the cuts. Also, make sure the front part of the saw is set up slightly higher than the rear part so that the saw head automatically retreats away from you when released; this also helps prevent the saw from inadvertently moving towards you due to gravity or vibration.
- When ripping wood (as opposed to cross-cutting), make sure the anti-kickback fingers are installed on both sides of the blade and properly adjusted. Also, use a spreader in ripping operations to prevent the cut in the wood from immediately closing and binding the blade, as this can cause the wood to kick-back or can cause damage to the saw blade.
- Before cutting, inspect wood for knots, nails, staples, or other items that could create a hazard if they contact the saw blade. Avoid making cuts that strike these objects.

Does anyone have any questions or comments about these tips for the safe use of radial arm saws? Anybody have other tips we did not cover here? Please be sure to sign your name to the training certification form so you get credit for attending today's training session.

RADIAL ARM SAW SAFETY



Unguarded Saw Blade



Properly Guarded Saw Blades



Radial Arm Saw Configured for Ripping – Anti-Kickback Fingers in Place
