TOOLBOX TALK

Portable Grinders: Guards, Wheels, and Speed

COMPANY	PROJECT	DATE	PRESENTED BY

Portable grinders and cutoff wheels can throw particles or broken wheel pieces toward you and nearby workers. Before cutting metal or grinding an edge, check the guard, the wheel, and the tool together. A wheel that fits is not automatically safe to use.

Check the guard before starting

- Check that the grinder has the proper guard for the wheel and the work. Do not remove a guard just to reach a tight spot or fit a larger wheel.
- OSHA requires the guard to be mounted so it stays lined up with the wheel. Check its mounting and fasteners; stop and report a guard that is loose, damaged, or will not stay in position.
- Where a guard is required on a portable grinder, the guard and its fasteners must be strong enough to hold the pieces if the wheel breaks. A bent or homemade cover is not a substitute for the proper guard.
- Look at where particles will travel before starting. As a practical precaution, reposition the work or keep nearby workers clear rather than relying on the guard to protect everyone.

Inspect and match the wheel

- OSHA requires every abrasive wheel to be closely inspected and ring-tested before it is mounted, to make sure it has no cracks or defects. A ring test means tapping the wheel lightly and listening: a sound wheel rings clear. If you are unsure how to do it, ask someone who knows the correct method.
- Set aside a cracked, damaged, or questionable wheel and report it. Do not mount it for a quick cut or pass it along for someone else to try.
- It's good practice to compare the speed rating on the wheel with the speed marked on the grinder. If the markings are missing or you are not sure they match, stop and have someone check the wheel before you use it.
- OSHA requires the wheel to fit freely on the spindle, the shaft it mounts on. Never force it on. Tighten the spindle nut only enough to hold the wheel in place.

Protect your eyes and stop for problems

- Wear eye protection with side protection against flying particles. Add face protection, such as a face shield, when the work calls for it. The guard does not replace the protection you wear.
- Regular prescription glasses alone are not the answer. Use prescription safety eyewear or protection that fits over your glasses without moving either pair out of its proper position.
- Check that eye and face protection fits snugly and gives adequate protection for the task. Clean dirty lenses so you can see the wheel, the work, and nearby people.
- OSHA requires grinders to have enough power to keep the spindle at a safe speed during normal work. If the grinder bogs down or acts strangely, stop and report it instead of pushing harder to finish.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

You need to cut a metal bracket. The spare wheel fits, but its speed marking is unreadable and the guard is loose. What would you do before continuing?

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Questions for the crew

1. What guard problems mean we stop?
2. What must happen before mounting a wheel?
3. What if you cannot verify wheel compatibility?

> **Check the guard, verify the wheel, protect your eyes, and stop when something is wrong.**

Sources: 29 CFR 1926.303, Abrasive wheels and tools; 29 CFR 1926.102, Eye and face protection

Drafted with AI for review by a competent person. Clever Rook writes from the official regulation text it cites, but it doesn't know your site. Check it against your conditions and your company's safety program before use. Not legal advice.

SIGN-IN SHEET

Portable Grinders: Guards, Wheels, and Speed

COMPANY	PROJECT	DATE

REVIEWED BY (COMPETENT PERSON)	REVIEW DATE

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