TOOLBOX TALK

Table Saws and Circular Saws: Guards and Kickback

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Cutting lumber and plywood puts your hands near moving teeth. The saw can also throw material back at you. A working guard helps protect you, but it does not replace a planned cut. Before you start, make sure the guard works and the material can move through the cut without binding.

Check the guards before cutting

- OSHA requires portable circular saws to have guards above and below the shoe. The shoe is the flat base that rides on the material. Check for missing, damaged, or loose parts before use.
- The lower guard must return to cover the blade automatically and instantly when the saw leaves the material. If it sticks or stays open, stop and report it. Do not tie or wedge it open.
- On a hand-fed table saw, a hood must cover the blade above the table and above the material. It must adjust to the material's thickness and stay in contact with it, without making the material hard to push through.
- Check that the table saw hood is mounted solid and lined up with the blade. A loose, damaged, or crooked hood is a reason to stop, not something to work around.

Plan against binding and kickback

- Kickback is when the saw or the material is suddenly thrown back toward you. Binding, where the cut closes and pinches the blade, can start it. Don't force a cut that is fighting you.
- Before cutting plywood or other panels, set up solid support for the panel and the cut pieces. Plan where each piece will go so its weight does not twist the material against the blade.
- Keep your hands out of the blade's path. Plan how you will feed the cut, and any help you need, before you start. Don't reach across a moving blade to catch or pull a piece.
- If the material binds or shifts, stop the cut and let the blade stop before you fix the setup. Don't keep pushing just to finish the last part.

Stop, shut off power, and report

- OSHA requires fixed power woodworking tools, like a stationary table saw, to have a disconnect switch that can be locked or tagged in the off position. Know where it is before you use the saw.
- Before clearing a jam or working on a guard, unplug the saw. On a fixed saw, lock or tag the disconnect switch off. A stopped blade alone does not prevent an unexpected restart.
- OSHA requires your employer to teach you how to recognize and avoid unsafe conditions in your work. If you have not been trained on the saw or the cut, ask your supervisor before you start.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

A circular saw's lower guard stays open after a panel cut. Someone suggests finishing the pile first. What would you do before another cut?

Questions for the crew

1. What should the lower guard do when the saw leaves the material?

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2. What could make a panel pinch the blade?
3. What do you do before clearing a jam?

> **Use working guards, support the material, and stop when the cut or the saw is not right.**

Sources: 29 CFR 1926.304, Woodworking tools; 29 CFR 1926.21, Safety training and education

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

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COMPANY	PROJECT	DATE

REVIEWED BY (COMPETENT PERSON)	REVIEW DATE

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